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NOVEMBER 2005 / £3.99
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BATTALION WARS
Nintendo's toon army will take over your Gamecube.
REVIEWED
POKEMON EMERALD
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"9 out of 10." NGC

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Tel: 01458 271184

Distributed by Marketforce (UK) Ltd, 5th Floor, Low Rise Building, Kings Reach Tower, Stamford Street, London SE1 9LS
Telephone 0207 633 3333

Overseas distribution by:
Future Publishing Ltd. Tel: 01225 442244

Printed in the UK by TPL Ltd



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Future Games: The First Choice For Gamers
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WOOF WOOF

Look at them. Look deep into their eyes and fear them, because weeks from now they'll have a hold on you like nothing you've experienced before. Whether you're in the comfort of your own home, on the bus, or simply minding your own business (wherever it is you do that business) you'll hear the unmistakable cry of 'Sit', 'Lie Down' or, dare we say it, 'Red Rocket' coming from members of the public training their pups. Or rather we hope you do, because *Nintendogs* is a game worthy of everyone's attention and the best possible praise.

Elsewhere this issue we have new shots and details of the year's biggest blockbuster, *King Kong*. A monster of a film licence that not only looks set to deliver on its initial promises, but could well surpass them. We sent Kittsy all the way to New York for an exclusive behind the scenes peek at how it's shaping up. You can read all about his discoveries starting on page 32.

And if you still want more, we've got details on some of the biggest games heading your way this winter. Enjoy.
TEAM NGC





Go to page 84 to see how you can get **NGC** delivered direct to your door, before it hits the newsstands. With a free copy of *Rainbow Six 3* too. Not too shabby.

WHY WE'RE No.1 FOR NINTENDO

NGC's the result of over a decade of gaming genius – so you're the best-informed Nintendo gamer around.



■ First there was the SNES, and Super Play came out alongside it – fanboys rejoiced.

■ A new machine meant a new magazine – but one with the same high standards.

■ Now we've got Gamecube, and you've got **NGC**. That's 13 years of Ninty love right there.

NGC'S FIVE STAR GUIDE TO WHAT'S UNMISSABLE THIS ISSUE!

1



BATTALION WARS

IT'S DEFINITELY WAR-MING UP

Enough of a prospect to win over Geraint's cold, dead heart. Must be good…

2



NINTENDOGS

THE CUTEST 'GAME' ON DS

Nintendogs gets its UK release, so we can finally understand what the hell is going on.

PAGE 32

KING KONG

A hands-on play test all the way from New York, where Kittsy tried to scale the Empire State Building to 'get into character'.



3 PAGE 39



4 PAGE 64

SPARTAN TOTAL WARRIOR

FINGER SLASHING GOOD

Put those pesky Romans in their place once and for all.

5 PAGE 86

HELLO AND GOODBYE

THE ODDBALLS' BALL

Twenty of the strangest games ever seen on Nintendo consoles. You'll laugh, you'll cry, you'll be truly amazed – a bit.

WHAT'S IN NGC?

Quite literally what's in **NGC**.

PREVIEWS

The games of the future…



NEWS

The ongoing drama that is Nintendo.

OTHER STUFF

The best of the rest.





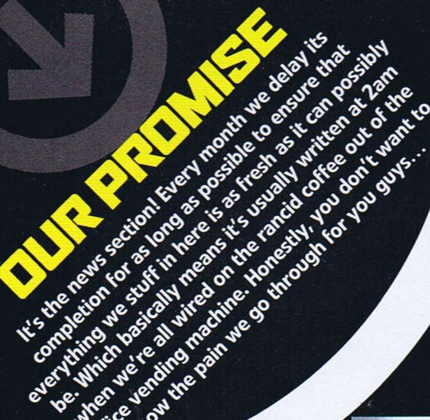
REVIEWS

It's the month of EA sports games…





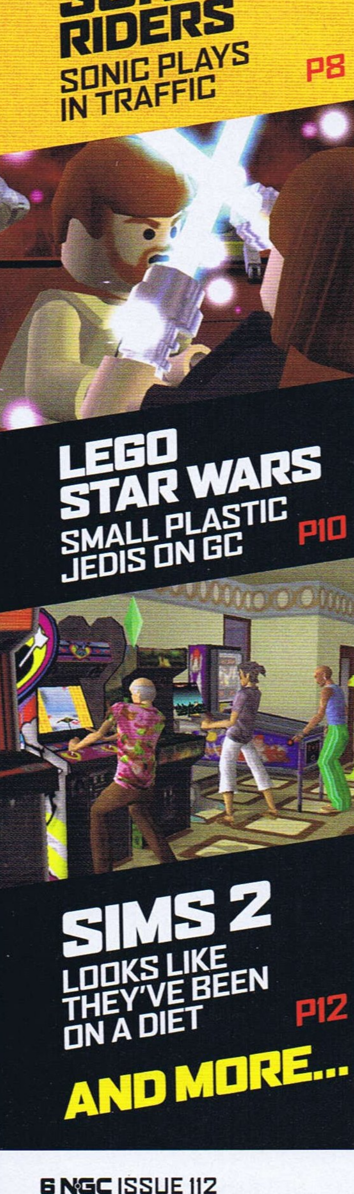


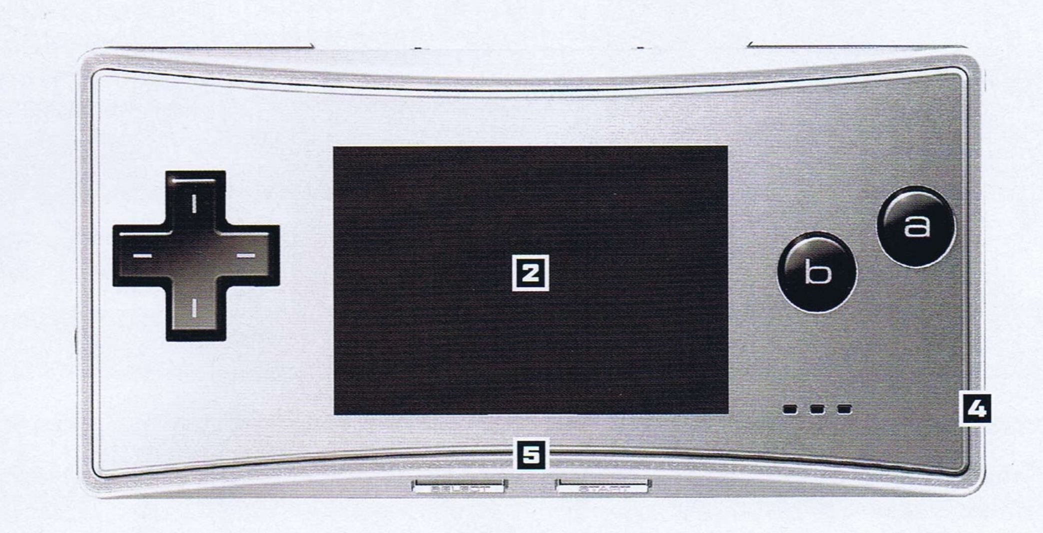


OUR PROMISE

It's the news section! Every month we delay its completion for as long as possible to ensure that everything we stuff in here is as fresh as it can possibly be. Which basically means it's usually written at 2am when we're all wired on the rancid coffee out of the office vending machine. Honestly, you don't want to know the pain we go through for you guys...

NEWSDESK



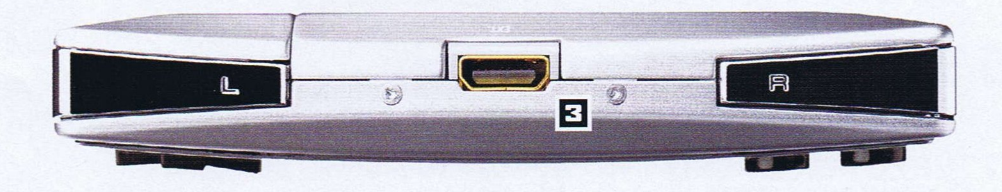


MEET THE micro

It may be four year old technology but we all want one. Right now.



So we've got one then. No, we're not going to bore you rigid by talking you through a piece of hardware that most of you have probably already owned for the last four years, but it would be rude not to give you a few impressions. Before we begin though, let's just point out the exact differences between the Micro and the SP.





1 SIZE

Yup, it's *definitely* smaller. We've made some comparisons in the photo on the left to give you some idea how much smaller, but it's roughly the same size and weight as a mobile phone (specifically a Nokia 3120) or iPod mini, making it genuinely pocket friendly. Brilliant stuff.

2 SCREEN

Unsurprisingly, it's substantially smaller than the GBA/SP screen – in fact it's only just over half the size. This is, in our opinion, a good thing, as it makes images seem sharper and more high-res than before. It's almost enough to breathe new life into old games – *Super Circuit* and *Minish Cap* for





THE LEGEND OF ZELDA TWILIGHT PRINCESS (GC)
It's been delayed until next year so they can make some improvements, but it looks like it could be one of the games of this generation. And with Shigsy claiming this is going to be the best *Zelda* yet, it looks set to be the game we're all hoping for.
Out: 2006



△ One of the many interchangeable plates.

△ The back of the machine. You can sniff it if you like.

△ The smaller screen makes things look super-sharp. Just look at Wario's schnoz!

example, look much better on the Micro. There's also an added bonus in the fact it's back-lit, making colours more vibrant and losing the washed-out look you often get from the SP.

3 EXTENSION PORT

There's only one extension port on the Micro, and it's significantly smaller than it is on the other units, which unfortunately means you can't use your DS/GBA charger with it. Though this is no big loss seeing as you'll get another one when you buy it. This also means you'll have to buy another special lead to link Micros together for multiplay. Unfortunately, though, you will not be able to link a Micro up to a Gamecube, which is a little irritating.

4 SIDE BUTTON

This little baby has two functions – its default use is volume control, handy for, you know, making noises LOUDER! (or quieter) depending on your mood. Hold down the L-trigger though, and it's a whole different ball game – letting you cycle through five different stages of brightness – the brightest of which is *super bright*.

5 START/SELECT

The basic function of these buttons hasn't changed at all – the reason we've drawn attention to them is a subtle one. You see, there's actually no battery light on the unit itself. Instead, the words Start and Select flash blue when you turn the unit on to indicate a decent charge and then turn red if you're running out of juice. Sneaky.

6 HEADPHONE JACK

Welcome home proper headphone jack, how we've missed you! If memory serves us correctly, Nintendo's excuse for leaving a proper headphone jack out of the SP was because the unit was 'too small', so it's a minor miracle that they've managed to fit one into the Micro. Hmmm. Still, we're happy it's been included this time around because it saves us from forking out for a fancy headphone dongle and gives us an excuse for a little celebratory party.

7 FACE PLATE

The cover sits nice and flush over the face of the unit. To get it off, you just need to poke these two little holes with a ballpoint, paper-clip, whatever takes your fancy and off it comes. We're not exactly going to rush out and buy different colours to match our manbags, make-up cases or any of that nonsense, but we have to say we've seen some beautiful plates doing the rounds. In particular, a Mario one at a Nintendo event that made us think of doing something illegal. Better yet, they also act as a screen guard, so if it gets scratched you can just buy a new one.

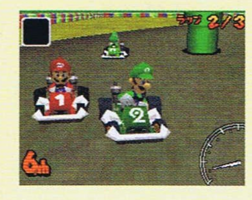
OVERALL

We like it. We really do. We did have the obvious misgivings (and maybe just a touch of cynicism) about the fact this is a third iteration of an existing technology, but in Nintendo's defence, it makes the GBA desirable again. It's actually made us dig up old games to play again, and not just for the purpose of this review. In fact there's very little to criticise about the Micro. It's very small, granted, but it isn't quite as fiddly as you'd think.

If we had to make a criticism though, it would be about the shoulder buttons. The L and R buttons are designed to be pressed from the top of the unit (which means curling your fingers over the top), and it doesn't feel as natural or relaxed as we would like. Ideally, you'd be able to activate them with the inside of your index fingers at the side of the unit – not least because it would make long sessions on action-heavy games a little less of a strain. But that's really just nit picking.

Overall it's a gorgeous little machine that's genuinely portable and, believe it or not, is perfectly playable in direct sunlight, which is more than can be said for other handhelds, including the DS. Okay, so maybe it's not a compulsory purchase, especially if you already have an SP, but it's still a desirable piece of kit and if we had a choice between playing GBA games on DS, Micro or SP, the Micro would win out every time.

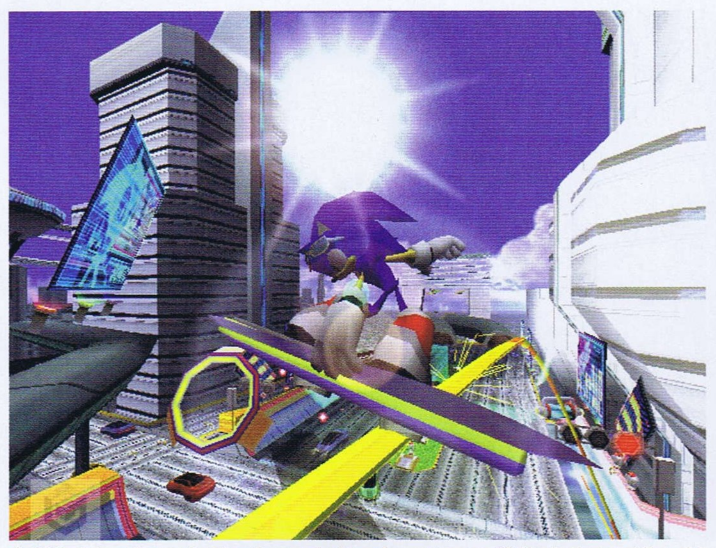




MARIO KART DS
Handheld, WiFi *Mario Kart* in beautiful 3D? This is one of the games the DS was made for. The only people that aren't excited by this one are probably in a coma somewhere.
Out: November



POKEMON XD: GALE OF DARKNESS (GC)
Despite *Colosseum* not delivering, *XD* is the real deal. Finally bringing the *Pokémon* experience to a home console, *Gale of Darkness* is going to be a winner.
Out: November





△ If Sonic's so fast, why does he need a board to get around? Maybe he's getting old.



△ Sega HQ has a special Animal 'N' Colour generator for moments like this.

SONIC'S SLIPSTREAM

Hogs on hoverboards? Whatever next?



After this month's *Sonic Gems Collection* left a bit of a bad taste in our mouths, we think we could be forgiven for turning our noses up at another slice of hog action, but *Sonic Riders* has tickled us somewhat – if only because it actually looks nice. Much nicer than some Mega CD retro nonsense, anyway.

Actually, 'nice' doesn't really do *Sonic Riders* justice, as these cracking shots would suggest. It looks like the mutant spawn of *Trickstyle* and *F-Zero*, with a dash of *SSX* thrown in for good measure. Taking their positions on the grid are the likes of Sonic himself, Knuckles, Tails (no surprises there, then) and stranger candidates like (wait for it) Storm the Albatross and Web the Swallow. No kidding…

Each brightly coloured animal perversion will race around a series of tracks to claim chaos emeralds as their own. Though naturally, it's not the winning that's important, it's the taking part – and it's here that things get much more interesting.

Each of the boards you see attached to the racers' feet are fuelled by air. As you race, this stock of fuel will deplete and can only be replenished by flying over certain areas of track. Nothing revolutionary there of course, but apparently, riding in the wake of other racers will stop your fuel depleting. Conversely, slipstreaming a competitor brings its own dangers, as they can disrupt the flow of air and send your racer flying, which will add a welcome tactical aspect to the game.

On top of this, riders can use alternative tactics to gain more fuel – namely pulling tricks whenever the amount of height gained allows for it, or, our personal favourite, using special moves to grind opponents' faces into the tarmac. Suffice to say Tails has already been earmarked for this kind of treatment.

Now maybe it's just us, but it sounds like the kind of risk/reward mechanism that could make this a future racer well worth looking out for. And whatever happens, we doubt it can be any worse than the absolutely abysmal *Sonic R*, which was about as much fun as sprinting across an ice-rink with two tubs of margarine strapped to your feet.



△ Air is essential for racing. You need it to fuel your board and it can be replenished by pulling tricks.



△ This shot looks like Nagoshi's blistering *F-Zero GX*. Wonder if any of his staff will be working on it?



△ We're surprised a Sonic-based racer hasn't been done better before – he's a perfect candidate for it.

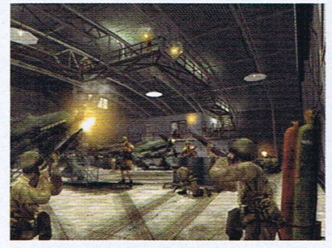


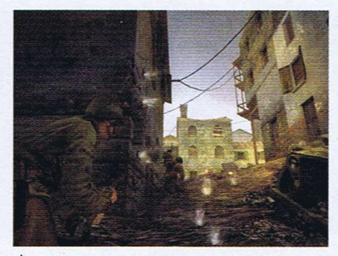


KING KONG
One of the few film licences to provoke genuine excitement in the office since *GoldenEye*, *King Kong* looks amazing. Made by Michel Ancel of *Beyond Good and Evil* fame, this is going to be great.
Out: November



GUN
Neversoft have taken a break from their *Tony Hawk's* production line to make this Wild West-based free-roaming crime fest. It's going to be a bit like *Grand Theft Auto*, but with horses instead of cars.
Out: November


△ Unlike *Medal of Honor* there are no luminous markers over pick-ups.


△ You have to admire the level of detail, particularly in urban areas.


△ Although often scripted, it doesn't shy from filling a scene with action.



LET'S GO TO WAR

Call of Duty is back on the front line…

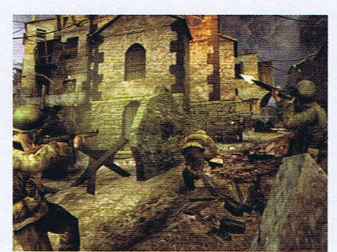
War, as people often ask, what is it good for? Well aside from killing people and watching mud being flung hundreds of feet into the air, it comes in pretty handy when you want to make a first-person shooter – as the parade of countless games over the years so clearly shows. Everyone likes to shoot people in the face (or so we've been lead to believe) and more so when it you're 'doing it for your country'.

So what sets *Call of Duty: The Big Red One* apart from all the others? As these new shots prove, it looks very nice – as nice as war can, anyway – particularly in terms of the amount of on-screen action. The previous game excelled in this department, but *The Big Red One*, out in November, is set to improve on it.

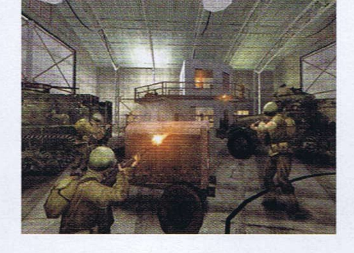
There are loads of NPCs running around on-screen at any given time, buildings being blown apart, planes flying overhead, and an unholy amount of dirt being chucked in your face at every possible opportunity. This is mostly down to some cleverly scripted set pieces, but you can't argue with the fact that it looks wonderfully cinematic.

Unlike the last game, which had you swapping between different characters and armies, you'll play through the game as just the one person.

As a result, *Big Red One* focuses more on your squad and the relationships between you and your comrades. As the campaign pans out over the three years the game is set in, you and your squad will evolve, getting older and more experienced through the ravages of war. Which means you'll not only grow attached to your squad, but you'll also have to face the dubious pleasure of watching them take a bullet to the head. Sounds… great.


△ We've not been particularly blessed with WWII shooters on GC…

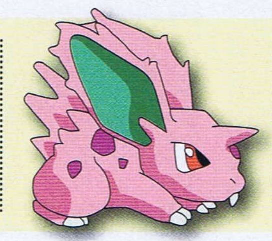

△ As yet, the console series has been unable to match its PC siblings, which are much loved for the depth of both their single player and multiplayer modes.




△ Treyarch have spent plenty of time making weapons feel authentic.



NEW SUPER MARIO BROS (DS)
The first official addition to the *Mario Bros* series in nearly a decade, this incarnation sees the plumbers reborn in beautiful 2D-yet-3D. And we simply can't wait. We want it. Now.
Out: TBA



POKEMON DIAMOND/PEARL (DS)
Although the developers are remaining tight-lipped on this one, we do know that it will be WiFi enabled and will be compatible with *Pokémon* GBA carts.
Out: 2006

NOW PLAYING

TOM E
OUENDAN
Nintendo NGC/112 5/5



Ouendan is completely mental. There's no other way to describe it. Imagine a feelgood version of Banzai with dancing and cheerleaders that look like Nazis and you're pretty close. Great stuff.

MARTIN
NINTENDOGS
Nintendo NGC/112 5/5



My puppy's called Doggy, and it's a Shih Tzu. Personally, I'd have lopped a couple of marks off this for not being able to rub your mutt's nose in its own effluent, and you can't administer lethal injections using a *Trauma Centre*-style syringe…

GERAINT
WARIO WARE
Nintendo NGC/82 90%



When Nintendo first sent us a GB Micro it came with a German copy of *Wario Ware* superglued into it. Despite playing it to death already, it still managed to exert its demonic grip on me.

PAUL
MARIO KART DS
Nintendo Demo



After months of playing this over and over, it's official – I rule at this. Our NGC pen-and-paper time trial actually proved the fact too, so I've rubbed everybody's noses in it.

THE SIMPSON
HULK: ULTIMATE DESTRUCTION
Vivendi NGC/110 79%



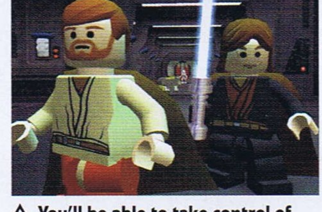
It may be a little repetitive, but leaping around the city trashing stuff is just too much fun. In fact, I've barely even started the game itself. I've been too busy breaking stuff.



A plastic McGregor gets ready to melt some face.



Accurate scenes from the film – right to the beard.


You'll be able to take control of most of the main characters.

BETTER LATE THAN NEVER



Lego Star Wars finally makes the jump to Gamecube in November.

Star Wars games haven't been at their best for some time now, and we wouldn't have held out much hope for *Lego Star Wars'* quality, but it's amazing what word of mouth does for a game. We've lost count of how many people have told us how fun it is – and who are we to argue with that?

The game spans the series of three prequels – picking out highlights from all three films and letting you play as a vast range of characters, from Qui-Gon Jinn and Yoda to Jar Jar Binks. The action itself boils down to little more than solving basic puzzles, indulging in simple platforming tasks and hacking and slashing your way through the droid army and hordes of separatists. It doesn't sound the most compelling thing in the world, but it's way the game is presented, the charm and obvious love that's gone into making it that shines through.

Cutscenes don't have voiceovers, instead, amusing bleeps and bloops accompany the little Lego men's expressive faces – bringing an atmosphere of cheekiness to the proceedings. Sure, it's a little late in the day for this to be coming out, but it's very welcome all the same.


Defeated enemies break apart into their constituent Lego bits. Satisfying.

GOLDENEYE: NEXT GENERATION

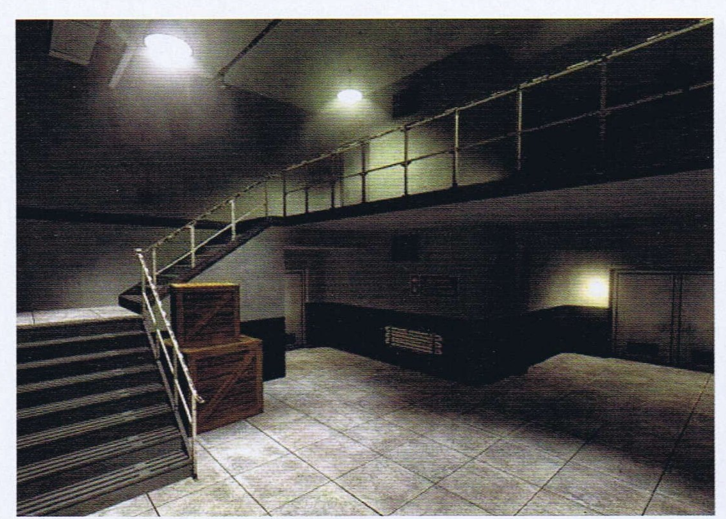
Rare classic straight from the Source…

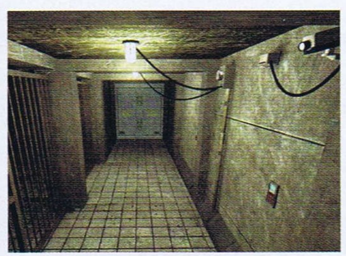
No, it's not what you're thinking, there's no *GoldenEye* remake or sequel headed to a Nintendo console just yet, but there's no doubting that this could well be the next best thing.

It's basically a Total Conversion mod of *GoldenEye* using Valve's SDK, the impressive engine that powers the PC's incredible *Half-Life 2*. The project started back in July and with over 30 modders beavering away on it (not to mention the many more recruits drafted in), it's made some pretty good headway.

On the whole, the team are looking to remain as close to the original as possible, while modernising many aspects of the game like AI and the HUD. They will also be throwing in some extras in the way of multiplayer modes and such like.

If all goes to plan, a playable beta version of the game will be up and running towards the beginning of next year. If you want more information, head on over to www.goldeneyesource.com.


The Facility (or rather the stairs to the toilet) in all its glory. The extra detail in the textures and improved lighting and physics make this an exciting prospect.


Recognise this? It's the corridor outside the cells in the Bunker level.

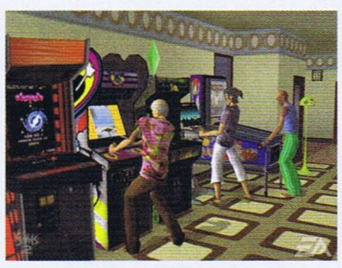
LITTLE COMPUTER PEOPLE

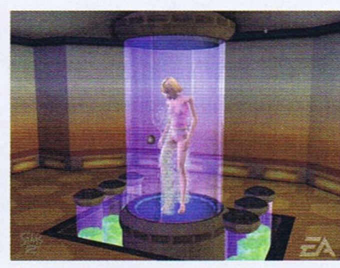
A trimmer Sims that's better for it...

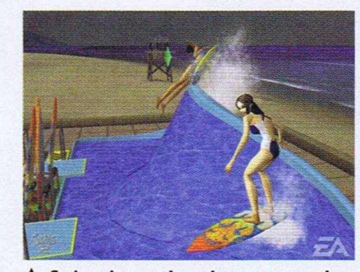
It's no secret that we preferred the more traditional Sim experience to that nasty little *Urbz* game. Although we have to admit that the more streamlined approach worked – it reduced some of the series' more annoying elements, made it slightly easier and less bothersome to cope with. By the sound of things, *Sims 2* is expanding on this idea while – thank God – ditching the vile veneer of enforced 'cool' that made *The Urbz* so utterly wretched.

The first major change is that the much loathed (on our part, anyway) point and click interface is now optional, with the focus on directly controlling your Sim. Not only does this mean your avatar doesn't get caught up in furniture, but it also makes you feel more connected to your Sim, more involved and less of a voyeur. EA seem to have done a pretty good job of keeping the game similar to its top selling PC cousin, while still adding plenty of console-specific content.

There'll be greater focus on diet, for example, with hundreds of indredients and recipies to seek out. As well as this, your Sim's concoctions will be able to alter not only your own Sim's behaviour, but also those around you, making them susceptible to your charms. Maybe. Or if you're feeling particularly sadistic, making them sick. Sounds great.


Part of the appeal is unlocking more and more furniture and accessories.


You can even get your own Bacta Tank for damaged Jedis. Droids included.

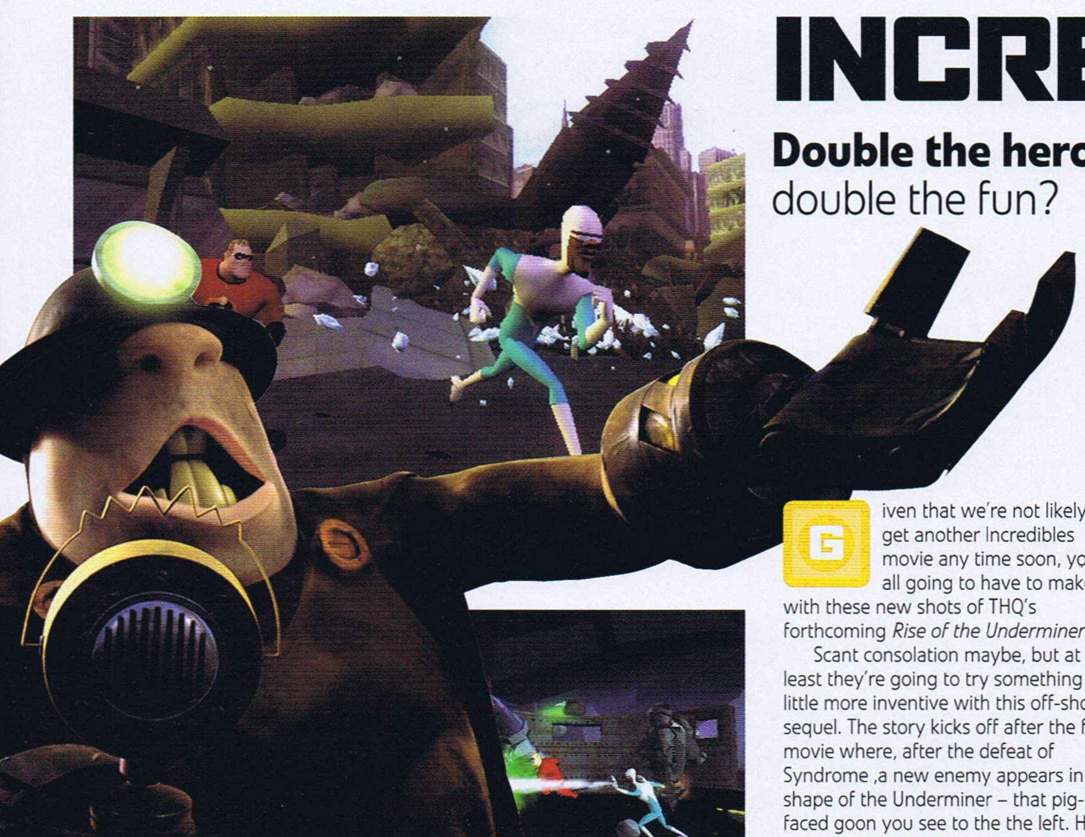

Swimming pools and carpets together at last! Seriously, who makes this stuff.



Apparently, you can have up to three layers of clothing on at the same time, which is supposed to, you know, make your Sim more 'individual' and stuff.

INCREDIBLE!

Double the hero, double the fun?

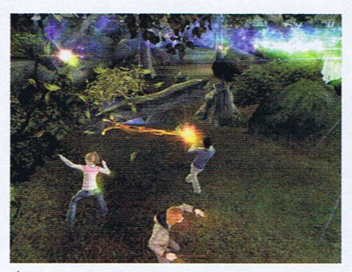



We just *love* the feel of tight lycra, as does any self-respecting superhero.

Given that we're not likely to get another Incredibles movie any time soon, you're all going to have to make do with these new shots of THQ's forthcoming *Rise of the Underminer*.

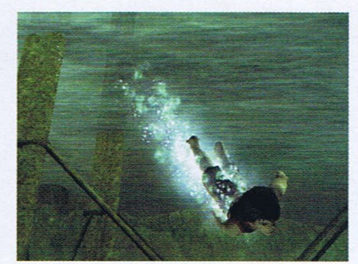
Scant consolation maybe, but at least they're going to try something a little more inventive with this off-shoot sequel. The story kicks off after the first movie where, after the defeat of Syndrome ,a new enemy appears in the shape of the Underminer – that pig-faced goon you see to the the left. He's actually half mole, half man. And, we assume, all bad.

In order to 'see him off' as it were, Mr Incredible leaves his family at home and teams up with Frozone in a dual-character system which allows you to swap between them at any time. Whoever you're controlling, the computer will take charge of the other, so you both have to work together accross the game's 20 or so levels, with Mr Incredible doing the bulk of the heavy lifting and Frozone creating ice bridges and the like.


△ In our opinion (well, East's actually) Goblet of Fire is the best book so far.


△ Look at Harry, all dressed up in his casual clothes. Bet he thinks he's cool.


△ Harry, Hermione and Ron work together to move giant boulders.


△ Harry dives to retrieve things from Merpeople in a series of tasks.

HARRY POTTER: GOBLET OF FIRE

Fresh new shots of the spectacled sorcerer and his annoying ginger friend.


Closely following the events of the book and its forthcoming film adaptation, *Goblet of Fire* is likely to be as big a seller as its predecessors – games which haven't exactly filled us with excitement. However, they've always been presented impeccably, with detailed environments and well written dialogue, and have always been good when it comes to bringing the world of Harry Potter to life and as such, have always been sure-fire hits. They're kind of like a *Zelda*-lite, and although they've struggled to hold our interest, they're exactly the kind of thing fans of the series are looking for.

> **"EXACTLY THE KIND OF THING FANS OF THE SERIES ARE LOOKING FOR"**

This time, you can expect much the same in terms of production values, but EA have trimmed back many of the adventure elements (which never really amounted to much more than simple fetch-and-carry quests or key-and-door tasks anyway) and focused more on action and combat. From what we've seen so far, the most promising part of the game is the teamwork aspect – using Harry's friends, Ron and Hermione, to solve puzzles. Some enemies, for example, will require the use of spells from each character in combination, and the game allows you to draft in your mates at any time to help out in some very welcome co-op action…



△ Judging by all those bananas, this is some kind of bonus stage…



△ Honestly, is there anyone out there who isn't excited by this?

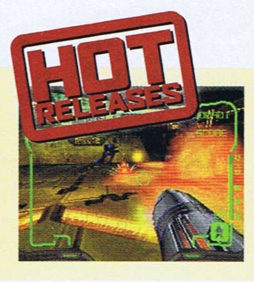


TOUCH YOUR MONKEY

The plastic primates are back…

This sounds like a match made in heaven – Sega's superb *Super Monkey Ball* condensed onto the DS's tiny screens. The outlook is pretty good, too. For starters the GBA version, even with the massive downgrade in technology and slightly clumsier D-pad, worked brilliantly. With the added sensitivity of a touch-screen, manoeuvring your little monkey around the courses shouldn't be a problem. Secondly, the rather nifty *Pac 'N' Roll* – which we awarded 4/5 in **NGC**/111 and, by the looks of things, boasts a fairly similar control scheme – proved that it's not only possible, but that it's the kind of game that could work exceptionally well on the DS.

As far as the specifics go, there aren't many, unfortunately. We do know that there'll be over 100 new courses to complete as well as the now customary minigames and battle modes. Even better is the fact that we don't have that long to wait for it either. Apparently it will be released in Japan in December of this year.



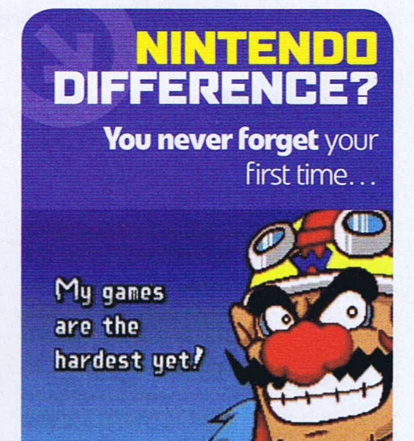
METROID PRIME HUNTERS (DS)
Every DS owner will have played this, and they will tell you just how good it's going to be. To top it off, the graphics are some of the best the DS has seen.
Out: October



BATTALION WARS (GC)
Originally starting life as an incarnation of Advance Wars, Battalion Wars has evolved beyond that. Although we weren't impressed with it at first, it's starting to look very promising indeed.
Out: October

NINTENDO DIFFERENCE?

You never forget your first time…



NO. 3 WARIO WARE INC

It was June 2003 that we got our first taste of Wario Ware. Looking back, it was a more significant occasion than we gave it credit for. For as long as we can remember, Nintendo have always said that simple was the way forward, that complicated games were beginning turn off those unfamiliar with gaming. While we could always see their point, we were always clamouring for the next Zelda, or Metroid.

Wario Ware changed that view forever – it crystalised in our mind that very ethos Nintendo were preaching. The premise was so simple, it took the most basic of gaming conventions and threw them in your face faster than you could catch your breath. You could play it for an hour, you could play it for a few short minutes. Anyone from the most hardcore to the most casual could enjoy it and appreciate it.

It heralded the beginning of Nintendo's real push towards a simpler, cleaner and more inclusive experience. They really put their money where their mouth was and showed that simpler really can be better – from Wario Ware to the likes of Donkey Konga and, more recently, the Nintendo DS. A system where, funnily enough, Wario Ware truly found its spiritual home…

PLAYED IN JAPAN

Live from NGC's Kyoto office, it's our monthly Nintendo report…



IMPORT NOW!

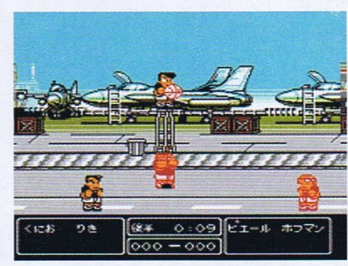
We bring you the very best of the recent, more obscure releases from Japan…



△ **You start this fire by blowing into the microphone. Genius.**



△ **'Let me just lean over a bit…' Tecmo: hard at work once again.**



△ **Kunio-Kun against the US Air Force. Place your bets now!**



△ **The Japanese love their beetles. As this picture seems to prove.**

SURVIVAL KIDS LOST IN BLUE (DS)



Take the 'celebrity' and 'love' out of Celebrity Love Island and you get *Survival Kids: Lost in Blue*. It's simple: you head off to a volcanic island and attempt to survive the difficult conditions by planting vegetables (for food), sourcing water (for life) and making fire with sticks (for a laugh). And you're not alone – you are also honour-bound to fend for the missus. And you need to be health conscious too, by keeping tabs on each of your bodies' organ stats. Are you properly hydrated? How much food are you digesting? Really, it's M*A*S*H*, the game. How about that?

RIO DE CARNIVAL (DS)



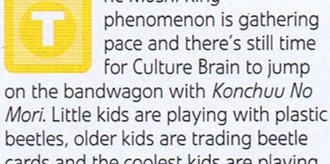
Rio De Carnival is not, as its name suggests, a new *Samba De Amigo*, but rather it's a casino game with suggestive posing from well-endowed anime girls. Unremarkably, Tecmo, Japan's most vociferous 'sex sells' preacher, had a big hand in *Rio De Carnival*. Hmm. It's not all bad news, though – the games are perfectly playable in a Windows Solitaire sort of way, and poker is always fun. Chisel away the smut and you've got a decent collection of simple card games and fruit machines to pass the time while you wait for the bus to take you to a pachinko parlour.

KUNIO-KUN COLLECTION (GBA)



Volleyball is a tremendously popular sport here in Japan, and console volleyball games have been wildly popular since the Famicom's *Kunio-Kun*. This new GBA collection from Atlus features the original as well as 1987's *Ganbare! Dunk Heroes*. When Kunio (the hero) is playing properly his game is a simple and addictive, but in *Ganbare*, Kunio-Kun takes to the streets of New York, ball in hand, and volleys his way through a bizarre side-scrolling platformer. It's a mixed bag, but *Kunio-Kun Collection* captures the 'magic' of volleyball without putting polluted sand under your fingernails. Nice.

KONCHUU NO MORI (GBA)



The *Mushi King* phenomenon is gathering pace and there's still time for Culture Brain to jump on the bandwagon with *Konchuu No Mori*. Little kids are playing with plastic beetles, older kids are trading beetle cards and the coolest kids are playing beetle games. This latest beetle game offers a two-player link-up for insect fighting and trading and brings some role-playing elements to the fore. *Konchuu* does the trick if you like your beetles, but want more forest exploration and fishing minigames. Otherwise, though, especially for the battle system, *Mushi King* wins.

BIG IN JAPAN

POWERFUL PRO BASEBALL

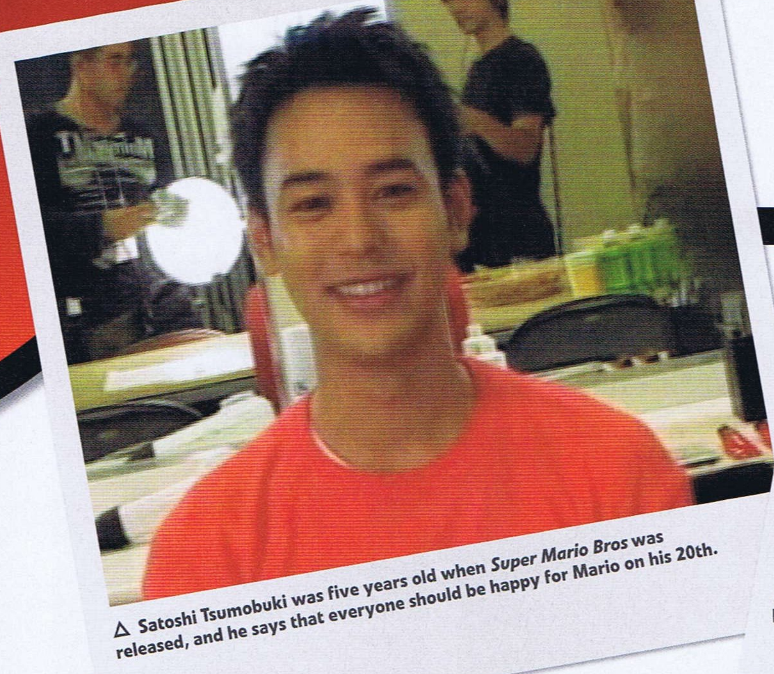
It's only baseball, but we like it.

In real life, baseball is a tedious sport punctuated by the consumption of hot dogs and beer. From the fans' view, anyway; the players actually have a much harder time of it.

Still, baseball makes for curiously entertaining videogames and one of the most curious of these is Konami's *Powerful Pro* series, which was only released in Japan. The games are famed for their artistic use of oversized heads, but if you can see beyond the gimmicky style, *Powerful Pro* is actually a very playable game.

We're now up to *Powerful Pro Baseball 12*, but any of the preceding 11 versions is as good a starting point as any. In truth, there's not a lot to choose from between the first game on the Super Famicom and the latest Gamecube incarnation.

Visually, things have actually stayed fairly constant over the years. If you want the cheapest *Powerful Pro* experience, it's probably best to pick up one of the releases on the Super Famicom (*Powerful Pro* through to *Powerful Pro 3* made their appearances on the system). Those are only two-player games, however, so check out the four-player N64 versions (numbers 5 and 6) if you don't mind paying a bit more for your big-headed baseball.

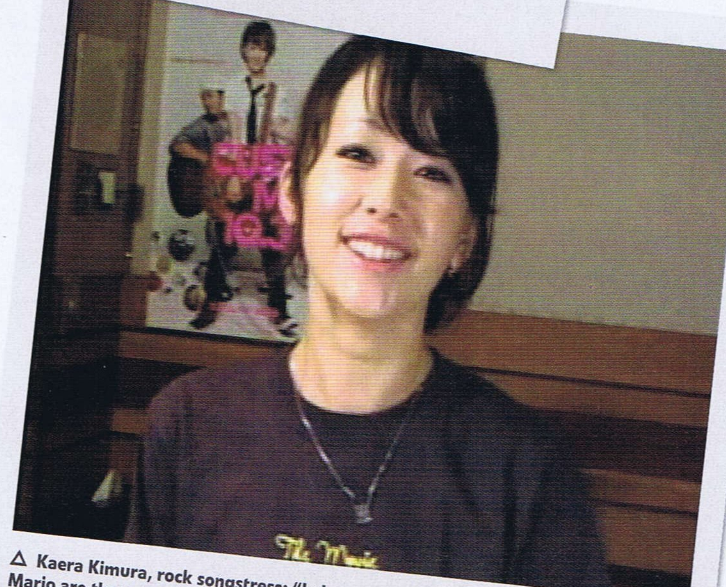

△ Satoshi Tsumobuki was five years old when *Super Mario Bros* was released, and he says that everyone should be happy for Mario on his 20th.


△ You can play *Super Mario Bros* for free in Osaka's best game shops. We'd describe these haunts as videogame Louvres.

SNAPSHOT

Japan celebrates the anniversary of Super Mario Bros.

Nintendo has been interviewing its friends, asking them what they love about Mario now that 20 years have passed since the Famicom's *Super Mario Bros*, and we've been doing the same. Sayuki Yamanaka is the 28 year old proprietor of our local cafe and she remembers the Good Old Days: "I was seven years old, and all of the children at school wanted a Famicom at the time for *Super Mario Bros*. Eventually I got a Famicom as a reward for my improved test results, but my parents said that I could only play for two hours a day. Still, while they worked and slept, we played in secret! All of my friends did the same. We always talked about bonus stages and secret items at school, and if someone found a new feature they would be respected and we would all say 'Sugoi!' ['Great!'] It was fun. Everyone played together. We thought Mario looked like an old man because he had a moustache! But why were there turtles?"


△ Kaera Kimura, rock songstress: "I almost beat *Super Mario Bros* once. Me and Mario are the same age, actually, which is a really nice feeling!"

EVERYONE'S PLAYING...

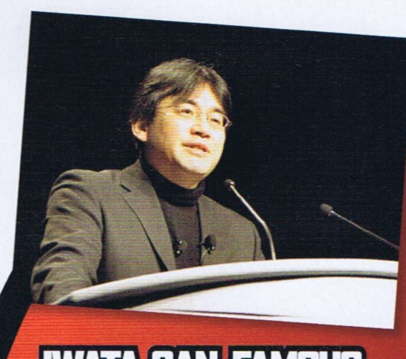
SUPER MARIO BROS



Let's do the time warp. (Again).

Although it was re-released in this form last year as part of the hugely popular Famicom Mini series, the GBA re-release of the Famicom version of *Super Mario Bros* has just been re-re-released to commemorate its 20th birthday. There's no real difference between the two new versions other than a birthday sticker on the packaging, which confirms this as a very timely release. Another similarity between the two re-releases is that they're both sold out. 8-bit nostalgia, especially for all things Nintendo, has really kicked into gear this year.

As one of our friends in Kyoto recalls, Mario had an enormous influence on the entire '80s generation: "I killed Mario so many times because I wasn't very good at *Super Mario Bros*, but whenever it was festival time I left a written prayer to ask that one day I may become like Super Mario!" So here's another chance for everyone to attempt to run Mario to the end of World 8. Thanks, Nintendo!



IWATA-SAN: FAMOUS. MIYAMOTO-SAN: WHO?

We conducted a survey to find out how many people in Kyoto actually knew of Iwata-san and Miyamoto-san. Surprisingly, the majority were familiar with Satoru Iwata and many of the people we spoke to referred to him in glowing terms ("an admirable person," no less). Virtually no one had even heard of Shigeru Miyamoto, though. Shocking news, but at least it bodes well for Nintendo's "admirable" president.

WIN DS AND DOGS





Win your very own pocket puppy…



Here's your chance to own one of the new pink or blue handhelds and a copy of *Nintendogs*. We've got five games and consoles to give away, and all you have to do is answer this simple question: which of these is not a breed of dog?

A Labrador
B Poodle
C Great White

Stick your answer on the back of a postcard and send it to:

Gone to the Dogs
NGC Magazine
Future Publishing
30 Monmouth St
Bath, BA1 2BW

Closing date:
2/11/05



NGC SAYS

It's all about the music, says Geraint Evans…

Playing *Sonic CD* again recently felt like a real chore – the more I played, the more it sullied my memory of it. By today's standards it's not that good a game, but the one thing that remained untainted by the experience was the music.

With my games collection steadily encroaching on my living space, I've become increasingly aware of how little time I spend actually replaying all the fond memories I've tucked away under beds and at the bottom of cupboards. There are times when I pick out a few classics for a quick blast, but I rarely settle with them for longer than an hour. It wasn't until *Sonic Gem*'s arrival that I really considered why.

Whenever I dig out an old game, it's rarely for the pleasure of playing – it's more for the pleasure of remembering what it was like. And the biggest mental cue I have for triggering that warm, fuzzy feeling of nostalgia is always the music. The Data Record music from *Phantasy Star II*, for example, takes me back to my very first RPG experience. The music from the Donut Plains in *Super Mario World* recalls the day I first got my SNES, or, purely for pleasure rather than nostalgia, I might dip into *DK Country* to listen to the music from Coral Capers…

Retro collections, while not always great in themselves, are still worthwhile for anyone who has a personal connection with their content. You may not have the will to complete them all over again, but they still contain those compositions of blips and bloops that remind you of what they meant to you at the time, and that can often be as important as actually playing them.

BURNOUT LEGENDS

The high-speed crash-athon races onto DS.

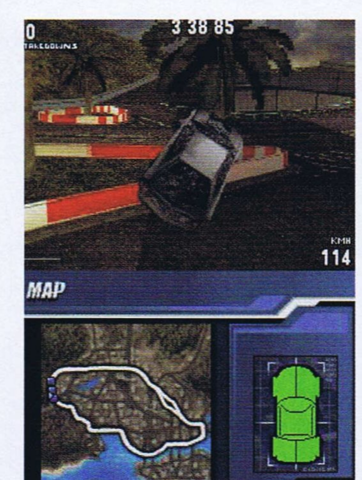


Courtesy of EA comes this handheld version of Criterion's ever-popular chaotic racing game.

It's certainly good news, especially considering the fact that we've missed out on two *Burnout* games so far.

Details are scarce at the moment, but we know that it will be based on the forthcoming PSP game, taking the tracks and cars from Criterion's past console efforts and shoe-horning them into a tiny DS card.

Unfortunately, EA hasn't told us who exactly is developing it – if it's Criterion (a developer that has acquitted itself very well this generation) then we could end up with the racer we've all wanted for so long now…



△ Drive recklessly for more bonuses.



△ The touch-screen indicates damage.



△ So far it looks pretty respectable.



VOTE AND WIN!

NOW IT'S GETTING SERIOUS!

VOTE FOR THE SHORTLIST FOR THE BIGGEST AWARDS OF THE YEAR

IN ASSOCIATION WITH The Carphone Warehouse ...for a better mobile life

You can be part of this year's Golden Joystick Awards by voting now for your favourite categories!

How to vote...
Text your vote and you will be entered into a draw to win a fabulous VIP trip for two to this year's Golden Joystick Awards and party in London PLUS hundreds of games to be won!

Example: If you think *Tekken 5* was the best *PlayStation 2* game of the year, text **VA 9** to **80889** – don't forget to leave a space between the code and the number!

PC GAME OF THE YEAR

- TEXT VE 1 TO 80889 > CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 5
- TEXT VE 2 TO 80889 > DOOM 3: RESURRECTION OF EVIL
- TEXT VE 3 TO 80889 > FOOTBALL MANAGER 2005
- TEXT VE 4 TO 80889 > GRAND THEFT AUTO: SAN ANDREAS
- TEXT VE 5 TO 80889 > HALF-LIFE 2
- TEXT VE 6 TO 80889 > ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON 3
- TEXT VE 7 TO 80889 > STAR WARS KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC II: THE SITH LORDS
- TEXT VE 8 TO 80889 > THE LORD OF THE RINGS: THE BATTLE FOR MIDDLE EARTH
- TEXT VE 9 TO 80889 > THE SIMS 2: UNIVERSITY
- TEXT VE 10 TO 80889 > WARHAMMER 40,000: DAWN OF WAR - WINTER ASSAULT

PLAYSTATION 2 GAME OF THE YEAR

- TEXT VA 1 TO 80889 > DESTROY ALL HUMANS!
- TEXT VA 2 TO 80889 > DEVIL MAY CRY 3
- TEXT VA 3 TO 80889 > GOD OF WAR
- TEXT VA 4 TO 80889 > GRAN TURISMO 4
- TEXT VA 5 TO 80889 > GTA: SAN ANDREAS
- TEXT VA 6 TO 80889 > LEGO STAR WARS
- TEXT VA 7 TO 80889 > METAL GEAR SOLID 3: SNAKE EATER
- TEXT VA 8 TO 80889 > PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 4
- TEXT VA 9 TO 80889 > TEKKEN 5
- TEXT VA 10 TO 80889 > TIMESPLITTERS FUTURE PERFECT

XBOX GAME OF THE YEAR

- TEXT VD 1 TO 80889 > CONKER: LIVE AND RELOADED
- TEXT VD 2 TO 80889 > DOOM 3
- TEXT VD 3 TO 80889 > FORZA MOTORSPORT
- TEXT VD 4 TO 80889 > GRAND THEFT AUTO: SAN ANDREAS
- TEXT VD 5 TO 80889 > HALO 2
- TEXT VD 6 TO 80889 > JADE EMPIRE
- TEXT VD 7 TO 80889 > ODDWORLD: STRANGER'S WRATH
- TEXT VD 8 TO 80889 > PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 4
- TEXT VD 9 TO 80889 > STAR WARS KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC II: THE SITH LORDS
- TEXT VD 10 TO 80889 > TOM CLANCY'S SPLINTER CELL CHAOS THEORY

GAMECUBE GAME OF THE YEAR

- TEXT VB 1 TO 80889 > CALL OF DUTY: FINEST HOUR
- TEXT VB 2 TO 80889 > DONKEY KONG: JUNGLE BEAT
- TEXT VB 3 TO 80889 > KILLER 7
- TEXT VB 4 TO 80889 > MARIO PARTY 6
- TEXT VB 5 TO 80889 > METROID PRIME 2: ECHOES
- TEXT VB 6 TO 80889 > PAPER MARIO: THE THOUSAND YEAR DOOR
- TEXT VB 7 TO 80889 > RESIDENT EVIL 4
- TEXT VB 8 TO 80889 > TALES OF SYMPHONIA
- TEXT VB 9 TO 80889 > THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: FOUR SWORDS ADVENTURES
- TEXT VB 10 TO 80889 > TIMESPLITTERS FUTURE PERFECT

THE SUN ONLINE - ONLINE GAME OF THE YEAR

- TEXT VF 1 TO 80889 > BATTLEFIELD 2
- TEXT VF 2 TO 80889 > CITY OF HEROES
- TEXT VF 3 TO 80889 > EVE ONLINE: EXODUS
- TEXT VF 4 TO 80889 > EVERQUEST II
- TEXT VF 5 TO 80889 > GUILD WARS
- TEXT VF 6 TO 80889 > PHANTASY STAR ONLINE BLUE BURST
- TEXT VF 7 TO 80889 > STAR WARS GALAXIES: EPISODE III RAGE OF THE WOOKIEES
- TEXT VF 8 TO 80889 > STAR WARS GALAXIES: THE TOTAL EXPERIENCE
- TEXT VF 9 TO 80889 > THE MATRIX ONLINE
- TEXT VF 10 TO 80889 > WORLD OF WARCRAFT

HANDHELD GAME OF THE YEAR

- TEXT VC 1 TO 80889 > ADVANCE WARS: DUAL STRIKE
- TEXT VC 2 TO 80889 > ANOTHER CODE: TWO MEMORIES
- TEXT VC 3 TO 80889 > BURNOUT LEGENDS
- TEXT VC 4 TO 80889 > FINAL FANTASY I & II: DAWN OF SOULS
- TEXT VC 5 TO 80889 > LEGO STAR WARS
- TEXT VC 6 TO 80889 > RIDGE RACER
- TEXT VC 7 TO 80889 > SUPER MARIO 64 DS
- TEXT VC 8 TO 80889 > THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: THE MINISH CAP
- TEXT VC 9 TO 80889 > WARIOWARE TOUCHED!
- TEXT VC 10 TO 80889 > WIPEOUT PURE

PUBLISHER OF THE YEAR

- TEXT VI 1 TO 80889 > ACTIVISION
- TEXT VI 2 TO 80889 > CAPCOM
- TEXT VI 3 TO 80889 > ELECTRONIC ARTS
- TEXT VI 4 TO 80889 > KONAMI
- TEXT VI 5 TO 80889 > MICROSOFT CORPORATION
- TEXT VI 6 TO 80889 > NINTENDO
- TEXT VI 7 TO 80889 > ROCKSTAR GAMES
- TEXT VI 8 TO 80889 > SONY
- TEXT VI 9 TO 80889 > THQ
- TEXT VI 10 TO 80889 > UBISOFT ENTERTAINMENT LTD.

THE SUN ONE TO WATCH FOR 2006

- TEXT VM 1 TO 80889 > AGE OF EMPIRES III
- TEXT VM 2 TO 80889 > ANIMAL CROSSING DS
- TEXT VM 3 TO 80889 > BURNOUT: REVENGE
- TEXT VM 4 TO 80889 > FINAL FANTASY XII
- TEXT VM 5 TO 80889 > GEARS OF WAR
- TEXT VM 6 TO 80889 > MARIO & LUIGI 2
- TEXT VM 7 TO 80889 > RESIDENT EVIL 5
- TEXT VM 8 TO 80889 > S.T.A.L.K.E.R.: SHADOW OF CHERNOBYL
- TEXT VM 9 TO 80889 > THE ELDER SCROLLS IV: OBLIVION
- TEXT VM 10 TO 80889 > UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2007

THE ONE TO WATCH FOR XMAS 2005

- TEXT VL 1 TO 80889 > BLACK & WHITE 2
- TEXT VL 2 TO 80889 > CALL OF DUTY 2: BIG RED ONE
- TEXT VL 3 TO 80889 > F.E.A.R.
- TEXT VL 4 TO 80889 > GRAND THEFT AUTO: LIBERTY CITY STORIES
- TEXT VL 5 TO 80889 > MARIO KART DS
- TEXT VL 6 TO 80889 > PERFECT DARK ZERO
- TEXT VL 7 TO 80889 > RESIDENT EVIL 4
- TEXT VL 8 TO 80889 > STAR WARS BATTLEFRONT II
- TEXT VL 9 TO 80889 > THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: TWILIGHT PRINCESS
- TEXT VL 10 TO 80889 > THE MOVIES

NUTS MAGAZINE ULTIMATE GAME OF THE YEAR

- TEXT VN 1 TO 80889 > BATTLEFIELD 2
- TEXT VN 2 TO 80889 > EVE ONLINE: EXODUS
- TEXT VN 3 TO 80889 > GOD OF WAR
- TEXT VN 4 TO 80889 > GRAND THEFT AUTO: SAN ANDREAS
- TEXT VN 5 TO 80889 > HALF-LIFE 2
- TEXT VN 6 TO 80889 > HALO 2
- TEXT VN 7 TO 80889 > METAL GEAR SOLID 3: SNAKE EATER
- TEXT VN 8 TO 80889 > PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 4
- TEXT VN 9 TO 80889 > RESIDENT EVIL 4
- TEXT VN 10 TO 80889 > WORLD OF WARCRAFT

HERO OF 2005

- TEXT VO 1 TO 80889 > CJ FROM GTA: SAN ANDREAS
- TEXT VO 2 TO 80889 > GORDON FREEMAN FROM HALF-LIFE 2
- TEXT VO 3 TO 80889 > LEON FROM RESIDENT EVIL 4
- TEXT VO 4 TO 80889 > MASTER CHIEF FROM HALO 2
- TEXT VO 5 TO 80889 > SNAKE FROM METAL GEAR SOLID 3

VILLAIN OF 2005

- TEXT VP 1 TO 80889 > DEATH'S HAND FROM JADE EMPIRE
- TEXT VP 2 TO 80889 > DR BREEN FROM HALF-LIFE 2
- TEXT VP 3 TO 80889 > OFFICER TENPENNY FROM GTA: SAN ANDREAS
- TEXT VP 4 TO 80889 > SADDLER FROM RESIDENT EVIL 4
- TEXT VP 5 TO 80889 > VOLGIN FROM METAL GEAR SOLID 3

BEST FILM-BASED GAME OF 2005

- TEXT VG 1 TO 80889 > RESIDENT EVIL 4
- TEXT VG 2 TO 80889 > SPIDER-MAN 2
- TEXT VG 3 TO 80889 > STAR WARS KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC II: THE SITH LORDS
- TEXT VG 4 TO 80889 > STAR WARS: EPISODE III - REVENGE OF THE SITH
- TEXT VG 5 TO 80889 > THE CHRONICLES OF RIDDICK: ESCAPE FROM BUTCHER BAY - DEVELOPER'S CUT

THE GIRL'S CHOICE FOR 2005

- TEXT VQ 1 TO 80889 > EVE ONLINE: EXODUS
- TEXT VQ 2 TO 80889 > GTA: SAN ANDREAS
- TEXT VQ 3 TO 80889 > HALO 2
- TEXT VQ 4 TO 80889 > RESIDENT EVIL 4
- TEXT VQ 5 TO 80889 > THE SIMS 2

RETAILER OF THE YEAR

- TEXT VJ 1 TO 80889 > AMAZON
- TEXT VJ 2 TO 80889 > GAME
- TEXT VJ 3 TO 80889 > GAMEPLAY
- TEXT VJ 4 TO 80889 > GAMESTATION
- TEXT VJ 5 TO 80889 > PLAY.COM

GAME ONE INNOVATION OF THE YEAR

- TEXT VK 1 TO 80889 > HALO 2 ONLINE RANKING
- TEXT VK 2 TO 80889 > NINTENDO DS
- TEXT VK 3 TO 80889 > NVIDIA SL
- TEXT VK 4 TO 80889 > SONY PSP
- TEXT VK 5 TO 80889 > VALVE STEAM

BEST GAME SOUNDTRACK OF 2005

- TEXT VH 1 TO 80889 > GRAN TURISMO 4
- TEXT VH 2 TO 80889 > GRAND THEFT AUTO: SAN ANDREAS
- TEXT VH 3 TO 80889 > HALO 2
- TEXT VH 4 TO 80889 > NEED FOR SPEED: UNDERGROUND
- TEXT VH 5 TO 80889 > TONY HAWK'S UNDERGROUND 2

RULES: To be in with a chance of winning the VIP trip to this year's Golden Joystick Awards, simply text your vote and wait for the instructions on how to enter. All you have to do is answer the question sent to you following your vote. All texts cost 50p per message plus your standard operator cost. Please ask the person who pays the bill before you send your vote. Service supplied by Mediacat Ltd, Grindhall, Henham, Herts, CM22 6AY
No purchase necessary: You may also vote online at www.goldenjoystick.co.uk

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ADVANCED WAR

The game used to be called *Advance Wars Under Fire*, but come E3 the name changed to *Battalion Wars*. Apparently, Nintendo and Kuju never intended the game to have anything to do with the series – strange considering the very similar artistic style.









△ There's a respectable level of detail on both infantry, vehicles and terrain and the game's engine deals with it admirably.

BATTALION WARS

Nintendo's toon army is all but ready to invade...



THE KNOWLEDGE

- Take control of single units and direct the tactics of whole armies.
- Quick and easy controls for unit commands and selection.
- Comandeer a wide range of vehicles, from bombers and fighters to tanks and infantry.

FACTFILE

Who's making it?

Kuju

What have they done before?

Fireblade (NGC/77, 59%)
Helicopter gunship sim that's enjoyable enough, but poorly balanced. Looks a bit duff too.



△ The units' AI is pretty competent, allowing you to, say, leave the tank to its own devices.

We have to admit that we've not been too kind to *Battalion Wars* in the past, mainly as a result of its dismal appearance at E3 in 2004. Sharing *Advance Wars'* name, but none of its strategic purity, it offered a squalid-looking third person action game with strategy elements. It looked decidedly weak, uninspiring and, frankly, a bit rubbish.

"BATTALION WARS DOESN'T JUST LOOK BETTER, IT LOOKS SUPERB"

But a year later we suddenly find ourselves getting excited. It has come on tremendously since its initial showing – with the biggest difference being the vast improvement in presentation. *Battalion Wars* doesn't just look better, it looks *superb*. See, developers Kuju have retained the visual style of the *Advance Wars* series, taking many stylistic cues from its handheld cousin – like the COs' character portraits and the chunky, almost toy-like units – and spectacularly brought them to life on the Gamecube's more powerful hardware.

The battlefields themselves are vast expanses of land, littered with rocky outcrops, trees and rolling hills to provide natural cover. Impressively despite an abundance of cosmetic details, strong texture work and huge variations in terrain, the only noticeable pop-up is in the far reaches of the level, with a clear view to the horizon and a





TAKE CONTROL

There's a vast array of different unit types to commandeer, each with their own strengths and weaknesses.





INFANTRY

There are a number of different infantry types to choose from, ranging from your bog-standard machine gun wielding grunt, to troops with flamethrowers and bazookas.

TANKS

Where would you be without the tank? Great for steaming into enemy bases, running over infantry or simply sitting there, soaking up the damage while you level an enemy base with well placed rounds.





RECON

Great for getting anywhere in a hurry, the Recon vehicles are excellent all-rounders, providing lightweight support for infantry, while heavier recon vehicles manage to pack in plenty of extra firepower.

BOMBERS

Great for taking out targets that are simply too tricky to take down using ground-based troops, bombers provide hard hitting air support. They are a little bulky, though, and if you miss your target, it takes ages to turn them back around.





FIGHTERS

Faster than bombers, these are ideal for air-to-air combat, and prove handy when it comes to lighter ground forces, like turrets and recon vehicles. Just make sure that you take out any rocket-toting infantry first.

TURRETS

Okay, so these aren't actually vehicles as such, but they're handy nonetheless. You can either use these yourself, or tell another person's unit to take it over. It provides powerful covering fire and is a solid defensive weapon.

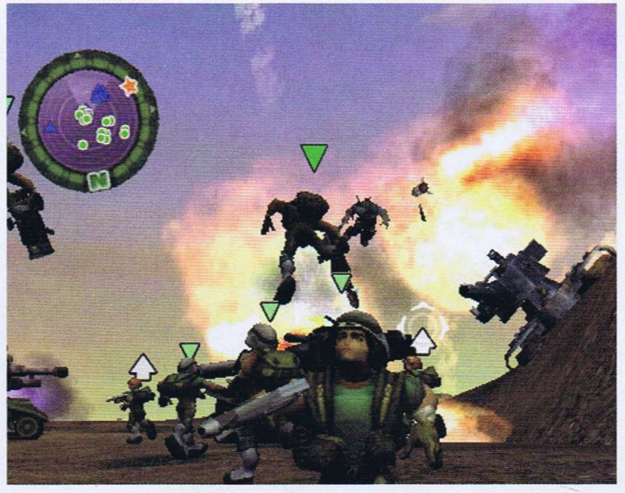




△ Choosing the right weapon for the job is essential. That flamethrower really isn't up to it.

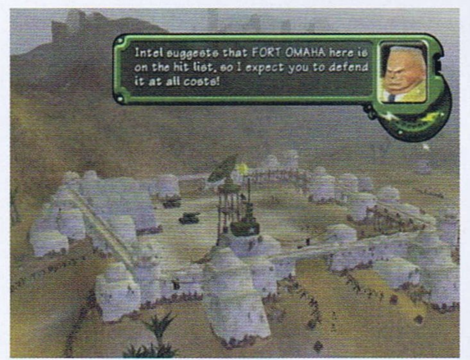
"Not just a straight-up third person blast"


△ By flicking the C-stick left and right you can select a group before choosing individual soldiers.


△ Things get pretty hectic, but it's simple enough to keep track of things.

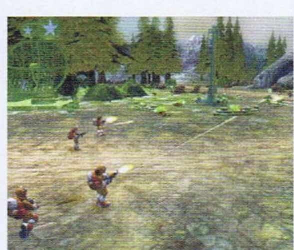


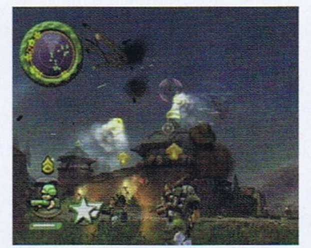




△ For this mission you have to defend this desert outpost from the incoming forces on the beach below.


△ The star icon lets you command your whole army at once.


△ You'll need to use the natural environment to your advantage.


△ Rocket launchers are good for defending against airborne units.

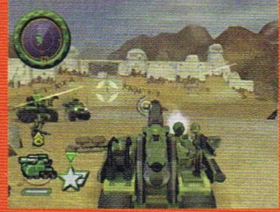
ON A MISSION

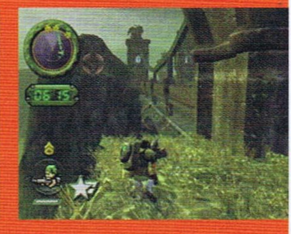
There are around 20 main missions in total, each requiring different approaches to succeed…


You get different units for each mission which are specifically tailored to the level, and you often come across new units to add to your army during a mission.


As you progress through each stage, your CO will give you new objectives. These vary from seek and destroy tasks to defensive missions, where you have to hold a position.


Because there are so many unit types, you really have to plan ahead. It's not too dissimilar from *Advance Wars* in the way that certain units will beat others.


Thankfully, one of our pet-hates – chasing dots on a radar screen – is alleviated by the way that you can swap control to whichever units are closer to your objective.


Unlike in the opening stages, an all-out action approach doesn't work, requiring you to think and shoot on your feet, and consider how to make best use of your units.


△ We love the way there's loads of spoken dialogue between officers and troops.

framerate that's as smooth as butter.

This is quite a feat as the action gets pretty hectic. It's not unusual to find yourself in heated exchanges between numerous tanks, heavy and light Recon vehicles (basically Jeeps with guns mounted on them) and helicopters, while little squads of men scuttle around you, spraying bullets at anything that moves. It looks very cartoony, but in many ways the chaotic action portrays war far more successfully than, say, the *Medal of Honor* series.

Technically then, *Battalion Wars* is on solid ground, but it's the unique gameplay that excites us the most. It's not just a straight-up third-person blast and it actually plays very differently to how you'd expect. In fact the best way to describe it would probably be as a real-time strategy played at ground level as it often feels like *Command and Conquer*, or even *Pikmin*.

Controlling a unit is pretty simple. There's no dual analogue control as the screenshots may suggest, instead you lock on to potential targets using the left shoulder button, much like in *Metroid*. Repeatedly pressing the L trigger will cycle through available targets and moving from left to right will automatically circle strafe your unit around your target. This system frees up the C-stick for a more important use – selecting and directing the various units under your command.

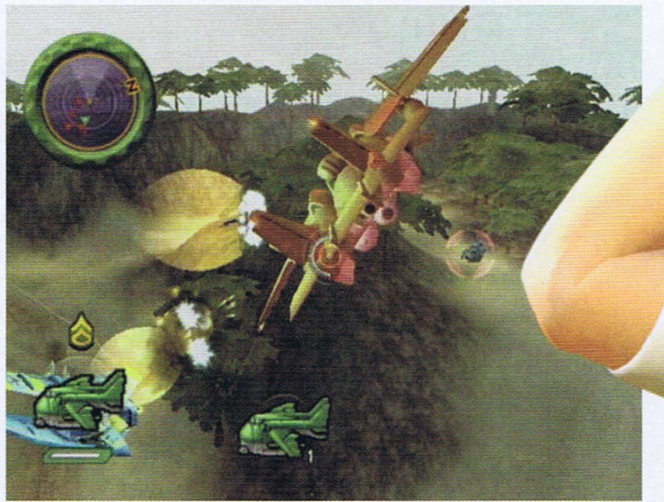
Hitting left and right on the C-stick cycles through the various units depicted by the icons on the bottom of the screen. You can



△ You'll need to make sure the ground is clear of anti-aircraft guns before any air support turns up.







△ The hulking bomber is slow to turn, but delivers a powerful punch.

highlight and control your entire army, separate squads and even individual units.

Once they're selected, you can ask them to stay where they are and defend an area or attack whichever target you're currently locked on to. It's a remarkably simple system that's not only quick and easy to use, but also gives you a satisfying degree of control over how your little army behaves. And of course, if the need arises you can always choose a specific unit to control directly.

"KUJU HAVE STRUCK A PERFECT BALANCE BETWEEN STRATEGY AND ACTION"

This system works very well – certainly far better than we expected – and not only have Kuju struck a perfect balance between considered strategy and all-out action, they've managed to give it a unique atmosphere and a rather cheeky sense of fun.

Maybe it's just us, but there's an air of Britishness about it and a kind of whimsical humour bubbling just below the surface. It reminds us of *Cannon Fodder* or *Worms* in the way that it makes light of war and combat without actually compromising the way it plays. The handling of tanks and other vehicles, for example, is exaggerated – they've all got a pleasingly floaty, lightweight feel, making them great fun to drive – and infantry units are animated with a lolloping spring in their step. Additionally, with the incessant radio chatter from your COs and units accompanying the action, there's a distinct sense of vibrancy about it all.

So far so good then, and we've been impressed enough by what we've seen to believe that *Battalion Wars* will turn out to be one of the biggest surprises of the year. Quite what Nintendo have been putting in Kuju's water supply over the last 12 months really is anyone's guess, but there can be no doubt that it has worked.

NGC VERDICT

UK DEC 9TH | US OCT | JAPAN OCT

To be honest, we are just relieved that Kuju have sorted out *Battalion Wars* since that complete horror show at E3 2004. We're actually rather impressed by it – particularly the way that it makes you feel like you're taking part in a real-time strategy, but brings you into the action while retaining the level of strategy that's so important in making it a more cerebral game.

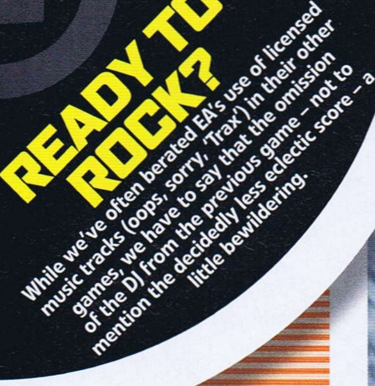
ANTICIPATION RATING











READY TO ROCK?

While we've often berated EA's use of licensed music tracks (oops, sorry, Trax) in their other games, we have to say that the omission of the DJ from the previous game – not to mention the decidedly less eclectic score – a little bewildering.



△ Just as in the previous games, pulling tricks helps to fill up your boost meter – essential for reaching the speeds needed to win.



THE KNOWLEDGE

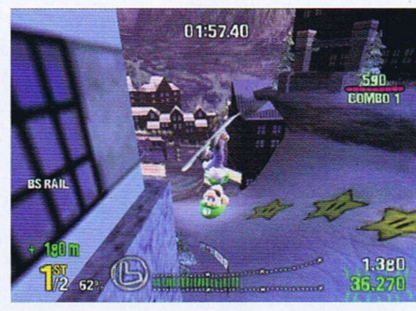
- Create your own character and build up their reputation from nobody to somebody.
- Massive mountain to explore, now with an extra peak and less garish visuals.
- Pick from either skis or boards, each with their own strengths and weaknesses.
- No more loading areas and annoying reset zones that hamper exploration.

FACTFILE

Who's making it?
EA

What have they done before?
SSX 3 (NGC/87 89%)
An impressively vast free-roaming mountain to cruise around, taking in challenges and races at your leisure.

SSX ON TOUR



△ Seconds after this shot we scuffed his head on the side of that building. Because we could.

Are you board stupid? Then why not try your hand at skiing instead?



We've finally got our hands on some playable code at long last. Unfortunately it's not entirely finished – there are still a few bugs to be mopped up, a slightly iffy framerate and a couple of instances of mid-race crashes for example – but at least it gives us a better grasp of the direction the game is heading in. And we like it.

It certainly retains the feel of the SSX series, with outlandish tricks and challenges being the main focus, as opposed to out-and-out racing. But there are some notable differences this time around, primarily in your ability to choose from either boarding or skiing.

When you start up the game you're prompted to create your characters (adjusting gender, facial features, height, haircuts and so forth) before picking your discipline. Whatever you choose you're going to be stuck with it for the duration of the game (unless you start a new character profile, of course) so you can't chop and change between them. It may sound unnecessarily restrictive, but it makes a lot of sense.

There are some subtle differences between the two disciplines, like the kind of tricks you pull off, the handling through turns and the speed you travel over various sections of the mountain.

> IT RETAINS THE FEEL OF THE SSX SERIES, WITH OUTLANDISH TRICKS AND CHALLENGES AS ITS FOCUS

Sticking to one discipline not only lets you get a better handle on the differences in the physics between board and ski, but it effectively expands the game's longevity by offering a different experience on your second play through the game.

Structurally, it offers a quite a significant step up from *SSX 3*, too. When you begin, you have to compete in little challenges called Shreds before you find yourself at the bottom of the reputation pile.

Once at the bottom of the pecking order, you have to work your way up by taking part in a range of challenges from one-on-one races to trick challenges, collecting tasks and so forth. If you're successful in these challenges



△ What on earth is he doing here?



IT'S-A HIM... AGAIN Shoot us. Shoot us NOW.



■ If you're just after a quick race, you can pick up either Mario, Peach or Luigi from the off. Luigi and Mario use boards and Peach Skis.



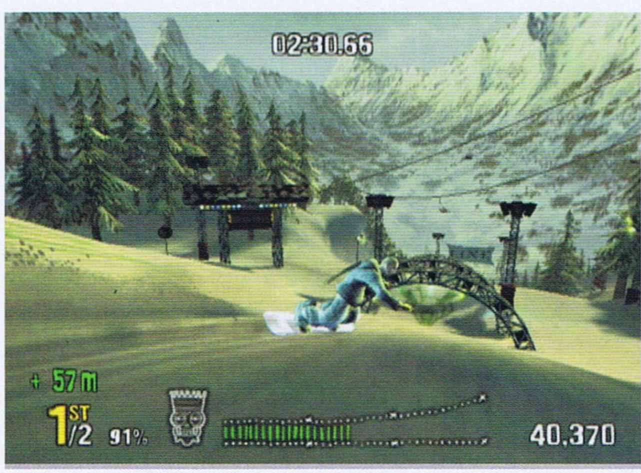
■ While there are some Nintendo-related effects on show, like little blips, whoo-hoos and beeps, EA haven't really put much effort in.



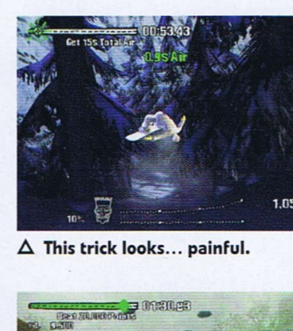
■ This Nintendo Village course, for example. The only thing Nintendo-ey about it is the icons in the snow. Not great, we have to say.



Δ It promises to be a huge game, but we hope EA make the feel of the riders more substantial.



Δ It's not quite as garish and over the top as the previous games – colours are much subtler, with a greater focus on realism. Visually speaking, anyway.



Δ This trick looks… painful.



Δ Ski-jump trick challenges return.



Δ There are a wide variety of Shred challenges. Here you have to grind a set distance.



Δ Some Princess – she'll catch her death, cavorting around the slopes in that mini-skirt.



Δ Courses often have many branching routes to choose.



Δ If you're going down, hammer B to regain control.

you'll earn Hype, which will see your reputation and standing increase. Secondary to these main challenges are little incidental factors which you can exploit to increase your Hype. Cutting up learners on the slopes (without knocking them down) for example, or avoiding the ski patrol who'll be on your tail if you behave too badly.

As for the play area itself, once again the emphasis is on exploring a huge expanse of mountain. EA have added an extra peak to the proceedings, making four distinct areas to race around.

Pleasingly, EA have made a point of addressing one the biggest criticisms of *On Tour*'s predecessor. Despite offering a free-roaming mountain last time, there were far too many reset points on the slopes. Areas where, although it looked like you could explore there, would reset your character back on the piste, sometimes messing up your race time or position.

This time they've done a better job of constructing the mountain so that if you can see it, you can actually travel there. Second to this, the slow transitional areas of *SSX 3*, which were put in place to allow the game to load up the next area, have also been done away with, with better streaming of the courses to make the overall experience consistently tighter and more exciting.



Δ Camera icons show a photo op.



Δ Peach looks a touch too spindly.

NGC VERDICT





We're quite pleased with what we've seen so far. EA have expanded the content of the game – which is no mean feat considering how big the last game was – and have actually addressed some of the series' biggest problems. We particularly like the fact that they've made a move towards realism while still retaining the feel of the series.

ANTICIPATION RATING

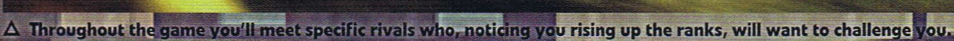




CHASE ME

The last *Need for Speed* to feature cop chases was *Need for Speed Hot Pursuit 2*. It was actually a pretty good game. On PS2. When EA decided to port the game over to Gamecube they ballsed it up good and proper – making it a bit rubbish in the process. Here's hoping history doesn't repeat itself.

△ That's a whole lot of trouble.



△ Throughout the game you'll meet specific rivals who, noticing you rising up the ranks, will want to challenge you.



THE KNOWLEDGE

- **Huge cityscape to race around and explore.**
- **Stronger focus on pursuit-based racing.**
- **Thwart the cops using environmental features.**
- **New bullet time effect to improve handling when you need it most.**

FACTFILE

Who's making it?
EA

What have they done before?
Need for Speed Underground 2 (NGC/100 69%)
Competent street racer with plenty of content, but a shocking framerate.

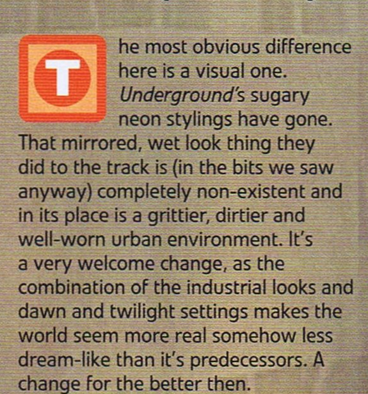
NEED FOR SPEED MOST WANTED

Even if you win the race, you're still going to have to escape the police…

The most obvious difference here is a visual one. *Underground*'s sugary neon stylings have gone. That mirrored, wet look thing they did to the track is (in the bits we saw anyway) completely non-existent and in its place is a grittier, dirtier and well-worn urban environment. It's a very welcome change, as the combination of the industrial looks and dawn and twilight settings makes the world seem more real somehow less dream-like than it's predecessors. A change for the better then.

Thematically, the game is quite different too. Yeah, it's still all about street racing and earning points to spend on your cars, and it's still about arriving in a city with something to prove, slowly working your way up the ranks of the illegal street racing circuit and increasing your driving reputation in the city. But this time it's not just about increasing your rep among your rival racers – it's about increasing (or decreasing, depending on your opinion) your reputation with the law too.

In addition to the more familiar modes like straight races, drag races and timed, point to point challenges, you now have pursuit-style challenges where you have to escape the police. For example, one challenge early in the game has you racing from one toll booth to another. When



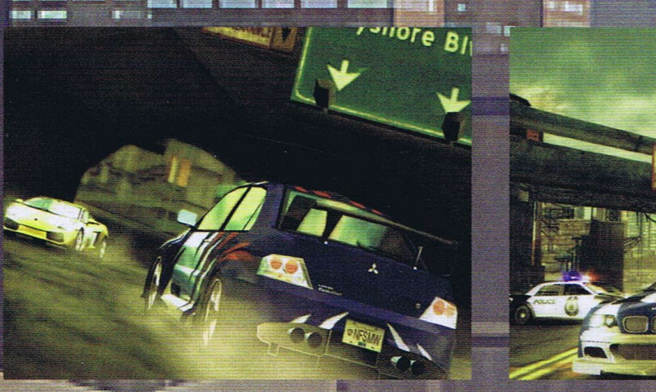
> **"ENOUGH OF A DEPARTURE FROM THE UNDERGROUND SERIES TO ROUSE OUR INTEREST"**

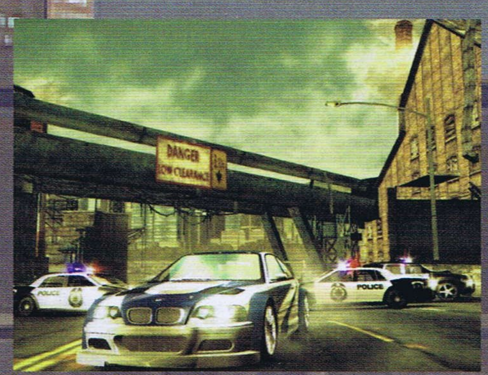
you cross the finish line, the last toll booth clocks your speed and alerts the police. From there on in you have free reign of the streets to try to get away in one piece.

To help you in these pursuits, *Need for Speed: MW* has an all-new bullet time-style feature that momentarily allows you to slow time, increasing your handling and manoeuvrability and allowing you to squeeze through traffic, under huge lorries or turn on a sixpence to out-fox the police. It's quite a sweet little feature and when combined with the mandatory boost feature (assuming that EA don't overcook either of them), will help add an extra dimension to the gameplay.

So far things are looking up. It's enough of a departure from the *Underground* series to rouse our interest, and, considering the fact we're not exactly blessed with decent racers on Gamecube, should hopefully prove itself worthy of our attention this Christmas.

As always, real cars will feature throughout. You can't wreck them, but they do take damage.



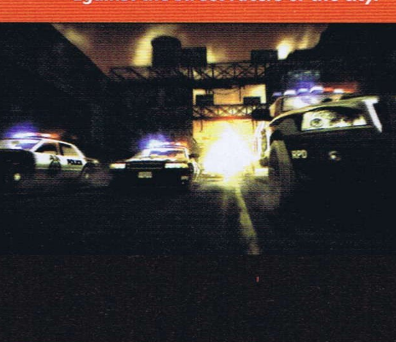




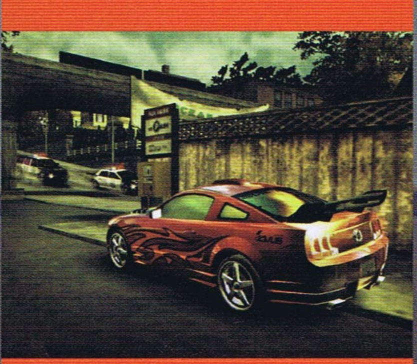
The police won't hassle just you. Any other racers caught up in the action will also be hounded. Which is only fair.

THE FILTH

When you arrive in the city, you'll learn about Sgt. Cross, an officer on a crusade against the street racers of the city.



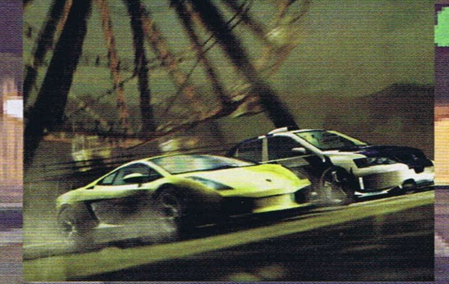
■ As you race around the city, you'll be caught on camera and the local force will try to stop you. Things start off simply, with the cops just tailing you and with their radio chatter in the background, so you know you're in trouble.



■ The more you try to get away, the more aggressive they'll get. You can end up with loads of cops chasing you, trying to stop you. You can also use environmental features to trap cars or smash them off the roads.

NGC VERDICT

UK 25 NOV | US 15 NOV | JAPAN TBC



We would have been disappointed if EA just churned out another *Underground*, but we're happy to report this looks and feels like a different game. As you'd expect from EA, the game is bursting at the seams with content, challenges and new features. Now all they need to do is sort out the framerate because when we last saw it, it was a bit ropy.

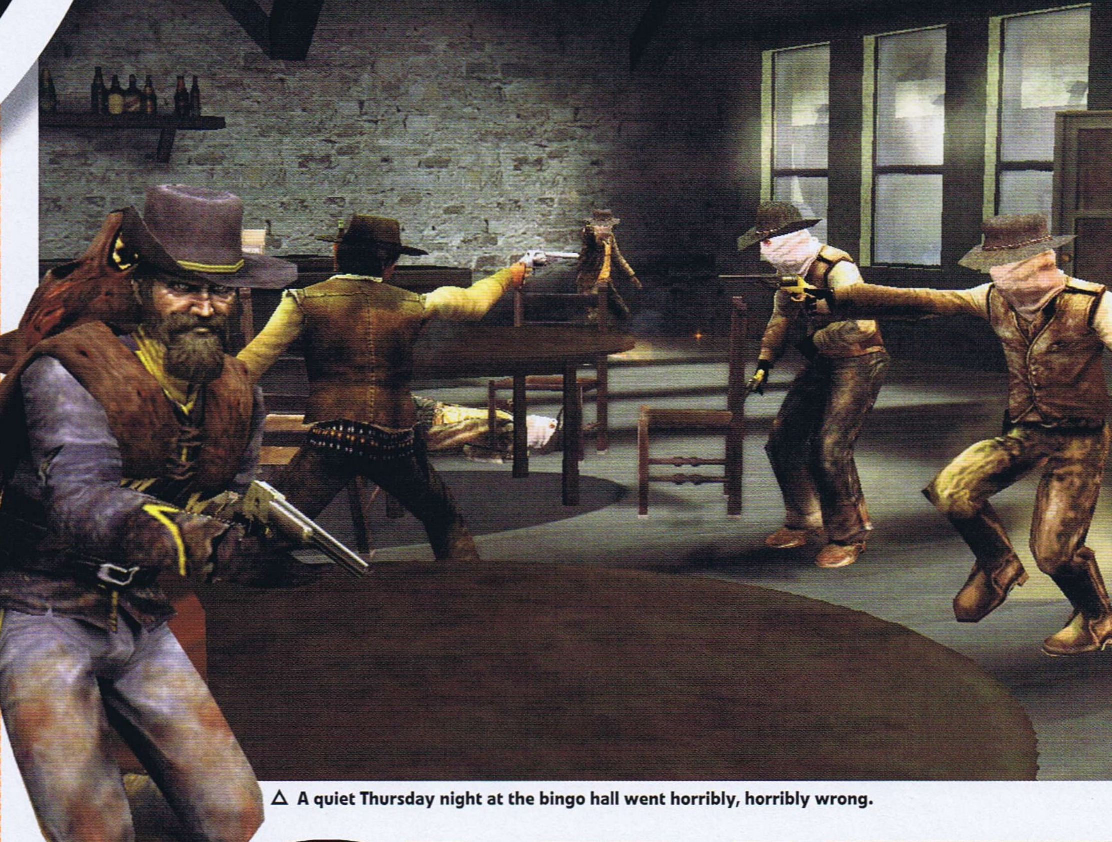
ANTICIPATION RATING






THE WILD FRONTIER

This is a long way from the clean-cut Roy Rogers brand of family Western. Think Deadwood meets Robert Rodriguez, and be glad you weren't born in 19th century America. It's much safer on a games console.



△ A quiet Thursday night at the bingo hall went horribly, horribly wrong.

THE KNOWLEDGE

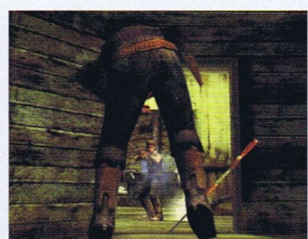
- Shoot, scalp and maim your way through a vast, seamless Wild West landscape.
- Around 20 large missions plus another 20 side-quests.
- Celebrity voiceovers (but we forget exactly who – Kris Kristofferson and the bloke from Millennium were among them).
- Horses.

FACTFILE

Who's making it?
Neversoft

What have they done before?
Tony Hawk's Underground 2 (NGC/100 82%)
They also did all of the other *Hawk* skateboarding games and the original *Spider-Man*.

GUN



How the West was won (and the losers were scalped following an ill-tempered game of poker)



You know you're in for a gun-happy time when your first meaningful instruction in a game is 'kill all quails'. And once you've graduated from birds, you'll have ample opportunity to fire lumps of lead into wolves, bison, bears and, eventually, people.

Welcome to the Wild West, a place where men are men, virtue is negotiable, and only bullets and gold say anything worth listening to. This lawless American frontier forms the spectacular setting for what is potentially the cowboy equivalent of *Grand Theft Auto*.

Following that initial bout of wildlife management, the game takes our lone gunslinger hero on a journey through the meanest country on earth, in search of his true father. Naturally, this involves a whole lot of killing.

You begin with a weedy rifle and pistol, although upgraded weapons will later be prised from the cold hands of defeated bosses. The more folk you shoot in succession, the higher your 'deadeye' meter rises, enabling you to slow down time and pull off some head-exploding shots.

You can't just walk into a town and start blasting people. Well, technically you can, but you probably shouldn't, as the grieving friends of the last murdered bartender, ranch owner, poker dealer or random face in the crowd will eventually take offence and start shooting back. Which is, obviously, really annoying.

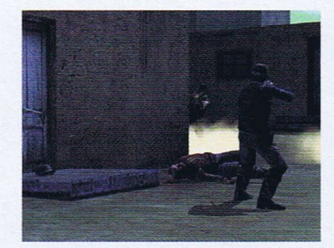
The only time summary executions are deemed acceptable is during a gunfight mission, at which point anything goes. You can take hostages as human shields and, if they're still alive by the time the immediate threat has been neutralised, either release them or do them in with a whacking great hunting knife. Choose the latter option and you can scalp the corpse as a trophy – doubly charming if the victim happens to be one of the local ladies.

Anyway, that's the sort of thing that went on in the Wild West and *Gun* pulls absolutely no punches in telling it as nasty as it probably was.

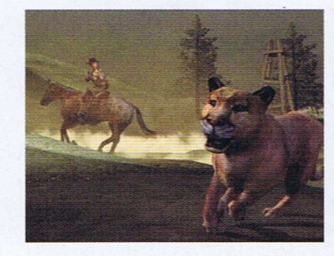
The game's free-roaming structure means you can walk, ride, canoe or take the train from town to town without any loading pauses, and there's always likely to be something to do. From gold-mining to gambling, herding cattle to hunting not-yet-endangered species, there are plenty of diversions.

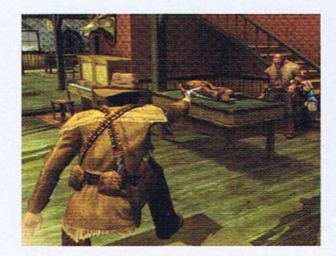
Gun is also going to beat *Twilight Princess* to the punch with its horseback

> "GUN PULLS ABSOLUTELY NO PUNCHES IN TELLING IT AS NASTY AS IT PROBABLY WAS"



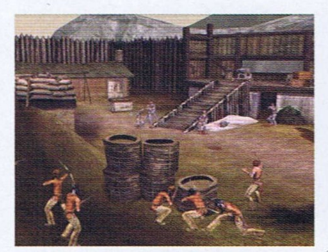
△ There's over an hour of (throat) cutscenes in the game.







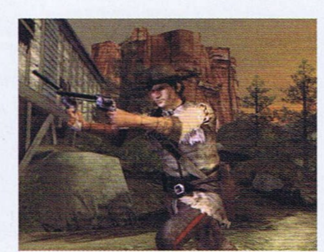
△ When somebody sets fire to your ma and pa's barn, it's time to quit whinin' and start shootin'. You could also try a-whoopin' and a-wailin'.



△ Injuns, just ripe for the scalpin'.



△ Protecting the stagecoach, sir.



△ Two guns = double the deadness.



△ Bison behind you! Bison behind you!



△ Reducing the local wolf problem by one breeding pair.

8-BIT GUNSLINGER



The Wild West might be a relatively unexploited theme for videogames right now, but back in the glory days of the arcades there was *Boot Hill*. This 1977 Midway coin-op was a shoot-'em-up showdown between two cowboys, rather like a simplified version of the Sheriff game in *Wario Ware*. Because the only colours anyone had bothered to invent back then were black and white, it projected its graphics onto a painted backdrop, thereby wowing the young punk gamers of the time.

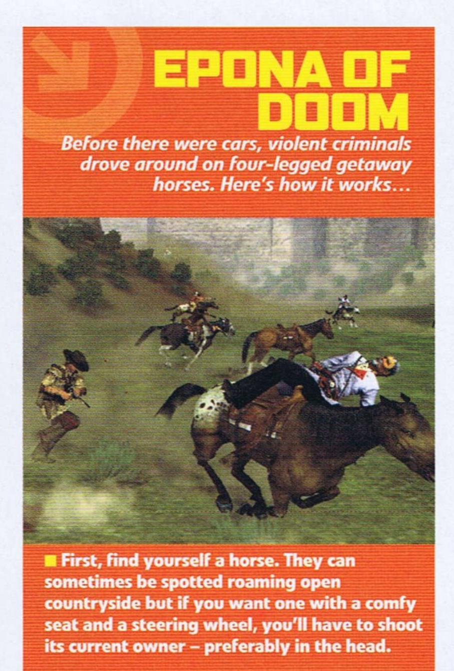
combat, during which you can employ the trusty deadeye function to make shooting while riding just a little bit easier. The horse animations are superb, although we're not too sure about the 'skid' funtion that effectively acts as a handbrake turn – your horse sits down and sort of slides sideways on its bum. We tried to make it do a pirouette but ran out of steam, although we suspect we'll have more luck when we get it fitted with a nitro boost.

Otherwise, it's all impressive. Enemies take painful tumbles when you shoot their horses from underneath them, and everything gets blasted around with authentic physics when you fire a dynamite-tipped arrow into a crowd. John Wayne would love it.



EPONA OF DOOM

Before there were cars, violent criminals drove around on four-legged getaway horses. Here's how it works…



■ First, find yourself a horse. They can sometimes be spotted roaming open countryside but if you want one with a comfy seat and a steering wheel, you'll have to shoot its current owner – preferably in the head.



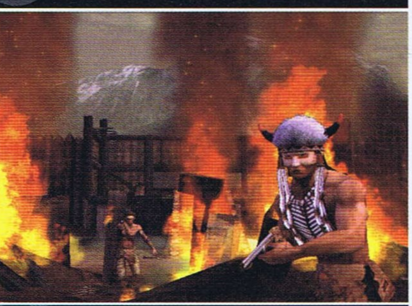
■ Once you're mobile, try doing some drive-by shootings to deafen your horse to the sound of gunfire. That way it won't bat an eyelid when you start plugging away at bad guys while cruising in Wild West comfort.

NGC VERDICT





UK NOV | US NOV | JAPAN TBC



As the only thing like this on Gamecube is *True Crime* (which is, when you think about it, totally different) *Gun* deserves to be a big hit. It's bigger, better and more varied than any previous Wild West game, not that there have been all that many, and leaves us hankerin' for the days when it was legal to shoot someone in the face over a game of cards.

ANTICIPATION RATING

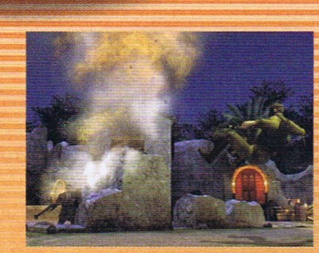






CLASSIC

After the disappointing *Everything or Nothing* and (the even worse) *GoldenEye: Rogue Agent*, it's nice to see EA tackling classic Bond films head on again, as it's here that the best content can be found. Surely anything has to be better than the derivative Bond rubbish they've been churning out of late?



THE KNOWLEDGE

- Play as Connery, through the films most memorable moments.
- Features the voice of Sean Connery himself.
- New and refined targeting system for more ways to kill.
- Over 14 weapons and gadgets.



△ In Istanbul you're pursued, and helped, by two mystery factions. If you've seen the films then it won't be much of a mystery.



FACTFILE

Who's making it?
EA

What have they done before?
EVERYTHING OR NOTHING (NGC/91 68%)
A decent enough try at a bond adventure – but it has far too many camera and control issues.

△ This lass is the Prime Minister's daughter.

JAMES BOND
FROM RUSSIA WITH LOVE

EA get back to the business of making proper Bond games – and let us take it for a spin…

From Russia With Love is reminiscent of EA's previous third person Bond adventure *Everything or Nothing*, at least insofar as the controls feel similar. You can shimmy up against walls and peek around corners, the unique method of aiming (by locking on to targets and fine tuning your aim with the C-Stick) returns, and the on-foot action is broken up periodically by driving sections.

However, while its predecessor was rife with annoying niggles, *From Russia With Love* seems much more refined.

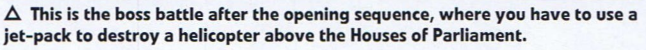
Closely following the plot of the film, EA have done a decent job of recreating that Bond atmosphere. Although, they have been helped immeasurably by the fact they've secured both the voice and the likeness of Connery – it's little details like this, the enemy costumes and even fighting styles, that contribute to giving this a distinctly '60s flavour. We particularly like the way cutscenes have been employed too. They're nowhere near as jarring as they were last time. They're also much shorter and more numerous, but they blend into the action nicely and help give it that much needed cinematic feel that was really lacking before.

> **"BOND CAN TARGET DIFFERENT PARTS OF AN ENEMY WITH DIFFERENT EFFECTS"**

We were lucky enough to have a look at quite a few stages during the demo. We saw levels that were set in the film's Gypsy camp and Hedge Maze as well as a tutorial at MI6 HQ, a quick driving level in Istanbul and an opening sequence set in London (which isn't actually in the film, but kicks off proceedings off nicely by making Bond invincible so you can get a handle on the controls).

Some levels were obviously further along in development than others, but it gave us plenty of opportunity to sample some of the differences in style from one to the other. The gypsy camp for example, was a multi-faceted level which had you knocking over cover, using the context-sensitive prompts to take down entrenched enemies, and freeing hostages before getting your hands on a sniper rifle.

The hedge maze was a stealth orientated level where pinpoint accuracy and silent hand-to-hand

△ This is the boss battle after the opening sequence, where you have to use a jet-pack to destroy a helicopter above the Houses of Parliament.



△ Ducking in and out of cover is an integral part of the gunfights.



△ This is from the seventh level – set in the gypsy camp. Complete with classic lady wrestling scene.



△ Of the bits we saw, the driving section looked the most ropy. Apparently, EA have kept development of both game styles in the same studio.

kills were the order of the day – while the London and Istanbul stages were faster paced run (or in Istanbul's case 'drive') and gun kind of affairs.

One thing that really came out strongly in each of these levels was the way that the aiming system (which was already pretty smart) has been improved. Using the focus feature, Bond can target different parts of an enemy with differing effects.

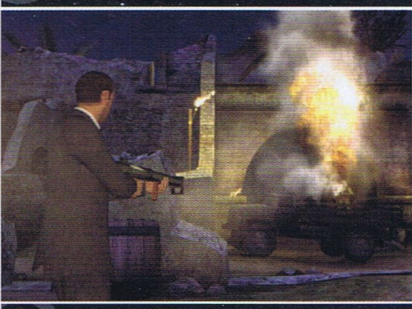
If you're quick enough, you can shoot a grenade out of an enemy's hands, disable radios attached to their belts and, in some cases, shoot away their grappling lines so they plummet to their doom. The harder the target is to hit, the quicker the kill and the greater the reward.

FISTICUFFS

Hand-to-hand combat plays a much more important part this time around. Get in close to your opponent and you can deliver a range of combos and grapple moves indicated by different button prompts that crop up when you start fighting. If you complete them successfully, you can take down a foe quickly and silently – ideal for sections where you don't want to alert anyone to your presence.

NGC VERDICT

UK 18TH NOV | US 1ST NOV | JAPAN TBC



We're going to reserve judgement on this one for the time being as the version we were shown was hilariously buggy – it featured Sean Connery suffering some kind of seizure at the start of the hedge maze level. One criticism we do have is that Bond felt lightweight and insubstantial. So we hope to God they sort that out…

ANTICIPATION RATING











SOCCER SLAM

Although Next Level Games don't have a Gamecube pedigree as such, some of the developers of *Sega Soccer Slam* have been drafted in to work on *Mario Smash Football*. Unsurprisingly both games play similarly.

THE KNOWLEDGE

- Four-player multiplayer mode.
- Two leagues available.
- There is only one major character per side, the rest of the team is made up of secondary characters like Koopas.

FACTFILE

Who's making it?
Next Level Games

What have they done before?
This is Next Level Games' first Gamecube title.



△ Peach is the new Roy Keane.



△ He shoots, he scores! Waaaaaaaah!





△ The Kremling keepers are as good as Chelsea's Peter Cech.

MARIO SMASH FOOTBALL

He's the best moustachioed footballer since David Seaman

Being Italian, Mario should be well versed in catennacio – that insanely dull brand of football where defence rules and teams shut up shop after going 1-0 up. You can imagine it now; Mario and Luigi knocking square passes along the back to the sound of boos from the Mushroom Kingdom crowd. Boring, boring Mario! You'll have to keep imagining as this is about as far removed as real football as you can get. You won't see any patient football here. Instead expect disgraceful fouls, fireball shots and the odd shell turning up on the pitch.

> **"THE SIMILARITIES WITH REAL FOOTBALL END THE MOMENT A MATCH KICKS OFF"**

Don't worry about fouling, instead just slide tackle Peach from behind or slam Donkey Kong into the forcefield that surrounds the pitch. But if you're fouled you'll get your revenge as you'll be awarded with a shell, which you can use to freeze your opponents.

The passing is very quick and smooth and although you can fire off snapshots, you also have powershots. They're like *FIFA Street's* gamebreakers, but here, the keeper can save them easily.

Still, for a five-a-side football game, it's easily as good as *FIFA Street* or *Sega Soccer Slam*. There's only one Mario.

NGC VERDICT

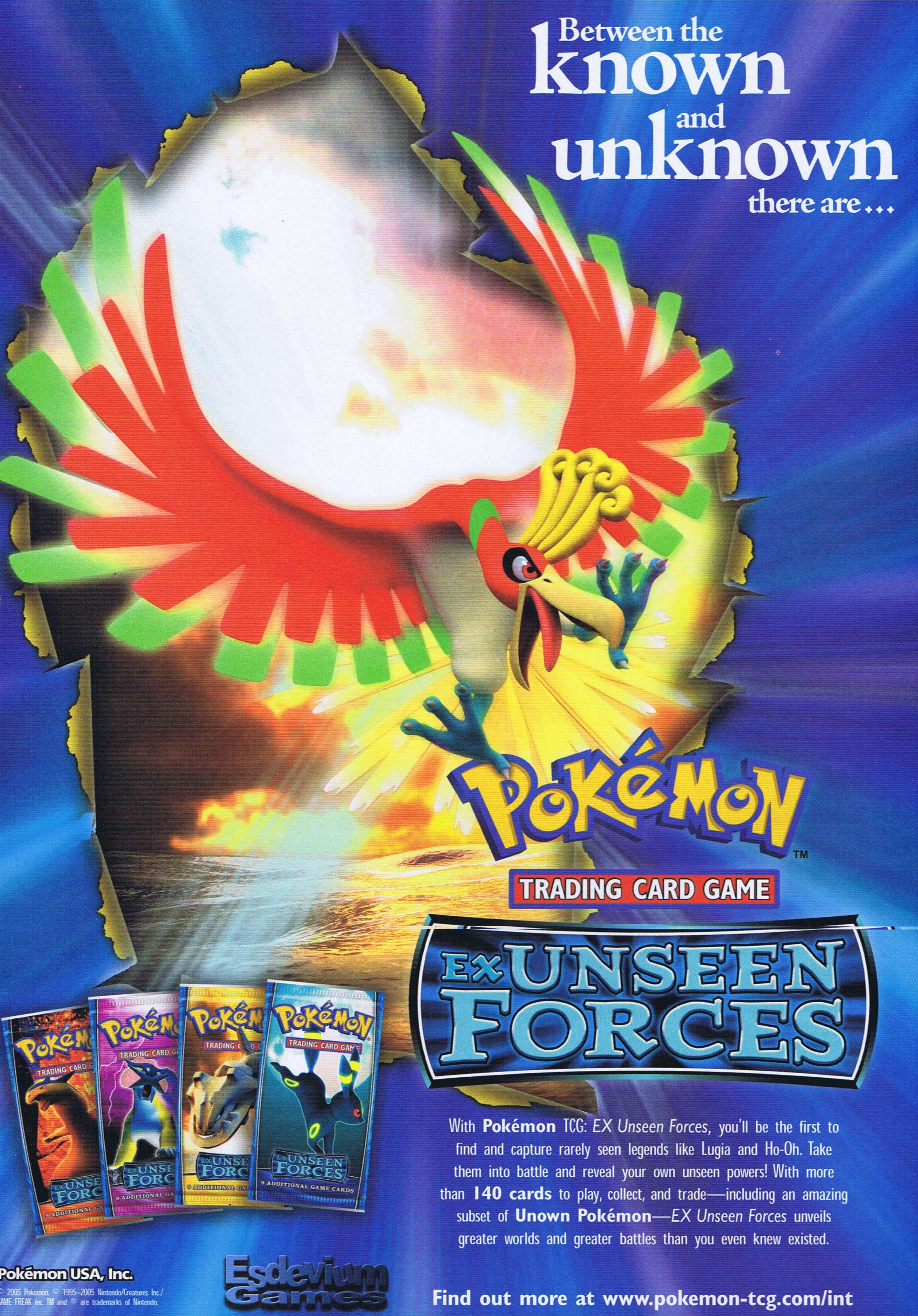
UK 18TH NOV | US 5TH DEC | JAPAN TBA



We had about 30 minutes with *Mario Smash Football* and enjoyed every single one of them. It's fast and a lot of fun, but although there is a Mushroom Kingdom Champions League, it may lack the subtleties and depth of the plumber's other sports games.

ANTICIPATION RATING




Between the
known
and
unknown
there are...
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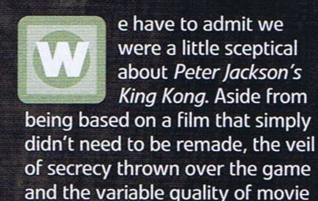
"Potentially the best Gamecube title of the Christmas period"





PETER JACKSON'S KING KONG

He climbs, he falls, and she screams an awful lot…



We have to admit we were a little sceptical about *Peter Jackson's King Kong*. Aside from being based on a film that simply didn't need to be remade, the veil of secrecy thrown over the game and the variable quality of movie adaptations in general didn't exactly inspire confidence.

However, having played a nearly finished version we're happy to report that *King Kong* is shaping up to be potentially the best Gamecube title of the Christmas period. Polished, inventive and technically impressive, it's everything that most movie adaptations are not.

As Peter Jackson's remake doesn't stray very far from the 1933 original, the game's storyline is likely to be familiar.

"POLISHED, INVENTIVE AND TECHNICALLY IMPRESSIVE, IT'S SHAPING UP VERY WELL"

As you may well know, it's the tale of a 1930s film crew who visit a mysterious island and end up travelling home to New York with the world's biggest monkey in tow. Their plans to make huge



amounts of cash by exhibiting the 'eighth wonder of the world' are scuttled when their star attraction falls in love with the leading lady and goes on the rampage, which all ends in tragedy and a crumpled pile of broken monkey at the bottom of the Empire State Building. It's very moving.

In the game, you alternate between playing swashbuckling Jack Driscoll, the most adventurous member of the film crew, and the mighty Kong. Jack's scenes are portrayed in a first-person perspective, while the acrobatic Kong climbs walls and batters dinosaurs with a third-person camera view.

The jungle scenes, as the party explores Skull Island, become reminiscent of a superior *Turok* game. There are dinosaurs all over the place, from small bitey ones to stompy brontosaurus herds, and a trouser-soilingly realistic T-Rex that drips dino-slobber from its jaws as it screams in your face.

Surprisingly, the game design

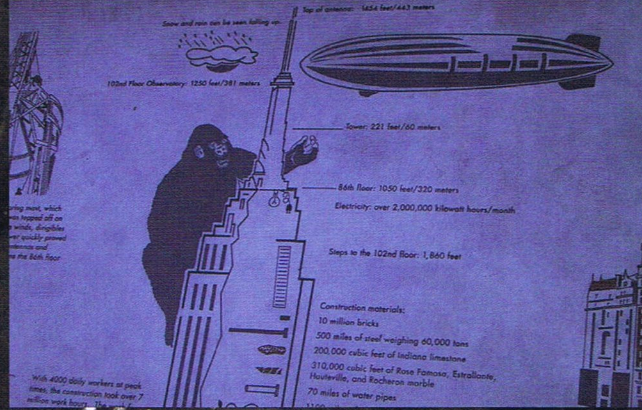
"A CRUMPLED PILE OF BROKEN MONKEY AT THE BOTTOM OF THE EMPIRE STATE BUILDING"

PETER JACKSON'S KING KONG

We travel to New York City to play with monkeys



△ Taking aim directly down the barrel is the most accurate way to fire most weapons.



△ This is as close as we can get to showing you Kong atop the Empire State Building. We travelled 3,400 miles west and 86 storeys up to take this photo.





does live up to the high-end visuals. Puzzles involving setting fires and spearing small 'decoy' animals are simple but well done, and although the path through the levels is very linear, the interaction with the claustrophobic forest environment is believably diverting. As you often have to take care of cameraman Carl Denham and shrieking Ann Darrow, you'll have to keep both your pointy stick and your wits about you. Other characters will help by tossing you guns, ammo and replacement sticks.

Sticks are what it's all about – you'll find and use them everywhere. They're particularly handy for getting rid of giant centipedes that take ages to shoot to death but can be pinned to a wall via the simple magic of sharpened wood.

When you play as Kong, it's more like a platform/fighting game. The camera position is fixed and you can use Kong's leaping, thumping, chest-pounding skills to clobber dinosaurs and biplanes alike. Smaller items, such as cars and trees, can be picked up and thrown at enemies, via an automatic lock-on system. Get hold of a raptor-sized dino and Kong can take a bite out of its head, then absent-mindedly carry its lolling body while fighting other foes. Sometimes he'll be carrying Ann and will set her gently down before protecting her during a battle. The animation is spectacularly monkeylike.

SNAP DRAGON!

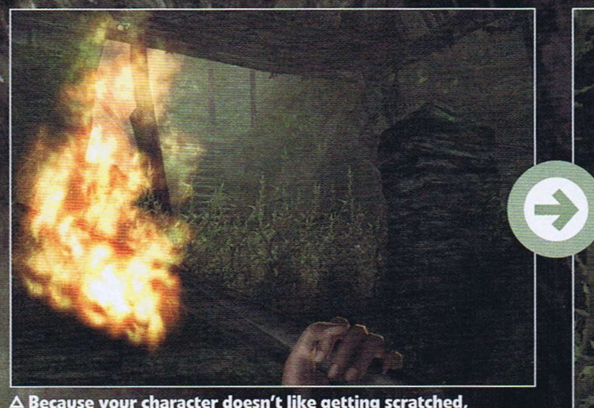
Kong's gentle way with a lizard, exposed at last.



■ This bit comes directly from one of the fight scenes in the movie. After a spot of wrestling and much beating of his hairy chest, Kong gets a good grip on the dino's mouth and heaves it apart until its head breaks. You do this by bashing the A button.



■ Satisfaction guaranteed. We particularly enjoyed the way the dino corpses remain on the ground, for the administration of afters – by battering the bodies, you can make them twitch. Smaller dinos can be picked up and chucked at natives.



△ Because your character doesn't like getting scratched, he won't go anywhere near a path with thorny bushes.

△ Lucky these things are highly flammable…



△ Having ignited the source of his frustration, our hero can sit back and wait for the jungle to burn into something softer.



FEEDING TIME

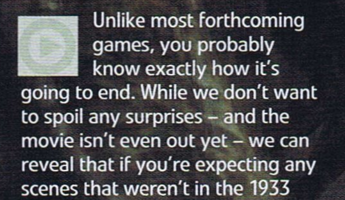
How to stop a hungry T-Rex, using a pistol and a flying monkeysaurus.







■ Although dinosaurs love the taste of human meat, they prefer the lighter flavour of other reptiles. According to those that know, people taste a lot like Spam whereas lizards are more chickeny – which is why this dinoflesh diversion works so well.



Unlike most forthcoming games, you probably know exactly how it's going to end. While we don't want to spoil any surprises – and the movie isn't even out yet – we can reveal that if you're expecting any scenes that weren't in the 1933 original, you'll be disappointed. Kong still doesn't figure out that the best way to avoid getting shot by biplanes would be to jump into the sea and swim home to Skull Island, rather than climb the world's tallest building. Monkey…

We couldn't show you any screens of the New York levels, otherwise Universal Studios would have dispatched Kong himself to tear off our arms and use our bones for toothpicks. Given that the city forms 15-20% of the game and the rest is the jungle you see on these pages, it's probably best that certain parts remain a secret anyway.

Just in case you don't frequent the cinema, *King Kong* (the movie and the game) will be released in December.

> "SWIM HOME TO SKULL ISLAND RATHER THAN CLIMB THE WORLD'S TALLEST BUILDING"

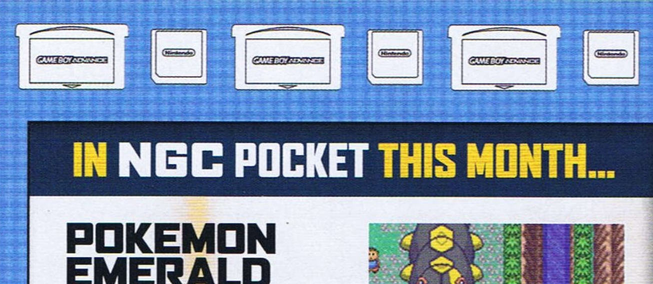
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EXCLUSIVE INTRODUCTION BY PETER JACKSON

ULTIMATE WINTER PREVIEW



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IN NGC POCKET THIS MONTH...



POKEMON EMERALD
The pocket monsters take over your GBA once again. P.48



CASTLEVANIA DS
The mighty series steps onto DS. P.50



NINTENDO DS GAME BOY ADVANCE

NINTENDOGS

You'll never need a real dog again! Besides, real dogs smell. **P.44**

PLUS!

- *Mario Kart DS, New Super Mario Bros* and *Gunstar Future Heroes* previewed!
- *Jump! Superstars* and *Ouendan* reviewed!
- Pictoart gallery!

NGC POCKET
NEWS • NEWS • NEWS • NEWS

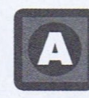
WELCOME TO NGC POCKET...

So *Nintendogs* has finally arrived. It went down a storm in Japan, it's currently flying off shelves in the US faster than a greased whippet and soon, oh so very soon, we'll find out just how partial Europe is to a bit of the old puppy love…

You all know how much we like to see developers making special use of the DS's hardware, but this month part of us wanted something a little bit more traditional, and *Castlevania: Dawn of Sorrow* has proved just the thing to satisfy us. No, it doesn't exactly exploit the DS to its full (although we have to admit, having the map screen open all the time is a real bonus in this kind of game), but it delivers a very substantial and very challenging adventure. Perfect for those of us craving something a bit meatier than the likes of, say, *Electroplankon* or *Nintendogs*.

In the run up to Christmas, the DS is finding itself a pretty sizeable library of games, and the next few months are going to strengthen it immeasurably – particularly if you're an avid importer. *Ouendan* (reviewed this issue) is not to be missed, the forthcoming *Lost in Blue* looks like it could be a real gem (review next issue maybe?), and back in the UK there's the small matter of *Mario Kart DS* and online play to look forward to. Plenty to warm the hands this winter then…

Geraint Evans, Handyman



NGC POCKET, NGC Magazine, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, BA1 2BW
Issue 11, November 2005
Editor: The Little Welshy
Contributors: Mr Surfer Man, Hello Kittsy, The Blue Flash, The Norwich Hobbit

METROID ONLINE

Metroid gets the WiFi treatment.





△ **The new shots look amazing.**

Nintendo revealed that *Metroid Prime: Hunters* will be delayed until 2006 last month. But just as we were moaning about the fact that the big N had put back another one of our most wanted until next year, they revealed the true reason for the slippage – it's going to be online.

Ever since *Metroid Prime: Hunters* was announced for DS, it seemed it would be the perfect game to play online alongside *Mario Kart*. But while we knew that the multiplayer mode would work with four players over a wireless network, Nintendo have finally confirmed that it will work with their wireless internet service. It's a bit of a bummer that we'll have to wait until the first few months of 2006 to play it, but it'll be worth it.



△ ***Mario Kart, Animal Crossing* and now this. DS has a great online line-up.**

THE HUNTERS

There are six hunters to choose from in Multiplayer mode, and Nintendo have revealed three new ones: Sylux, Trace and Weavel.



Sylux
A sharp shooter and tracer who hates the Galactic Federation. He has a super-weapon that could destroy Samus and the Federation.



Trace
Trace is looking to increase the power of the Krikens by invading planets and searching for the ultimate weapon.



Weavel
Used to be a powerful space pirate, but was weakened after a battle with Samus. Also searching for the ultimate weapon in the Tetra system.

LUNAR GENESIS (AGAIN)

It's coming to DS after all.





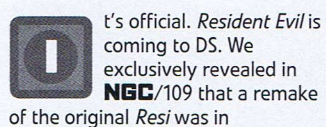
After telling you that Ubisoft would not be releasing *Lunar Genesis* in the UK, Rising Star games have stepped in and have announced that they will be releasing it in late autumn. Time for Geraint to start milking his hyperactive RPG gland again.

At 70 hours long, it's certainly going to be an epic, but the good news is that it's going to use DS's features to the full. For starters you can control the entire game with the touch-screen and, like *Advance Wars*, the battles will take place on both screens, with the aircraft on the top screen and ground troops on the bottom, and you can blow into the microphone during a battle to make your troops panic.

There are also going to be some wireless multiplayer battles, where you'll use the scratch cards which you can earn in single-player mode.

SILENT BUT DEADLY

Resident Evil remake confirmed

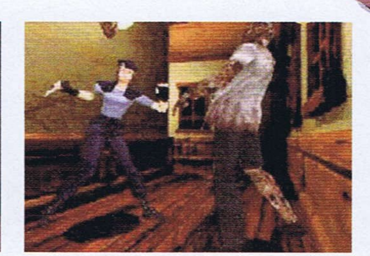
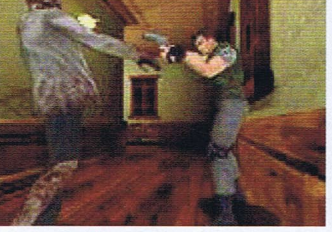
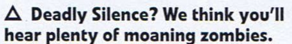


It's official. *Resident Evil* is coming to DS. We exclusively revealed in **NGC**/109 that a remake of the original *Resi* was in development, but we now have concrete details and some shots.

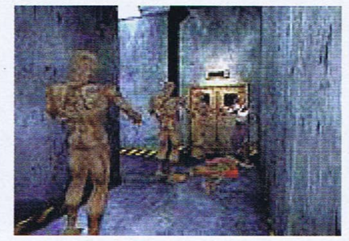
Due for release in 2006, *Resident Evil: Deadly Silence* will be a remake of the original 1996 classic, but there have been changes to ensure that it uses all of the DS's unique features. So, as we previously reported you will be scratching at the screen with your stylus to take slashes at zombies with your knife and you'll also use it to type in numbers on a keypad.

Like the Gamecube remake, the zombies will be scarier and smarter than in the original and will crash through doors as they chase you around the mansion. Finally, Capcom are also planning to feature wireless support, but we have no details on this as yet. We'll keep you updated on any news as soon as we get it.

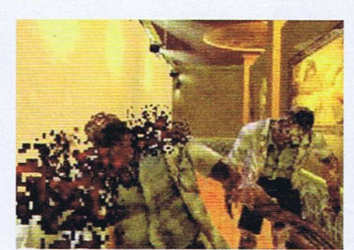


△ Deadly Silence? We think you'll hear plenty of moaning zombies.



△ Just like in the Cube version, the zombies will chase after you.



△ Just what we like to see – a pleasing level of crimson. Age rating, anyone?

TAMAGOTCHI: CORNER SHOP

A teeth-pulling, cake-decorating world of fun.



Tamagotchi: Corner Shop is a working title by the way. And it's a good job too – it's not as if you'll only be selling newspapers and a quarter of rhubarb and custards, is it?

As we reported in **NGC**/110, the aim of the game is to help one of the main characters (Mametchi, Kuchipatchi or Memetchi) open and run their own shop, all for the pleasure of Princess Tamako. You probably already know about the dentist's and bakery, but we have now found out that you can also open a beauty salon and a flower shop.

It all sounds very good, but it's the minigames that are the most intriguing things, as you'll be applying make-up, performing dental surgery and decorating cakes with your stylus.

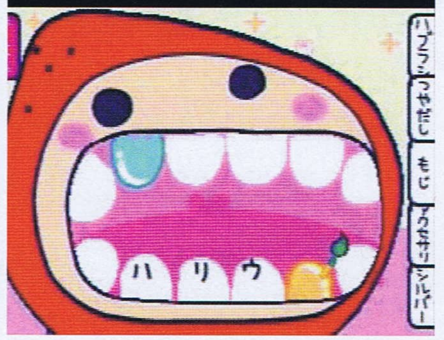
Tamagotchi: Corner Shop is scheduled for release on the DS this winter. But for now here are the first ever screenshots.



△ The shops seem a bit girly.



△ Clean teeth with your stylus.

NEWS WIRES

NEW COLOURS

We're not sure if Nintendo are aiming the new pink DS at girls or football hooligans (it'll match their pink Ralph Lauren polo shirts), but either way it looks rather nice. They've also announced a blue DS, and both colours will be released on 7th October, the same day as *Nintendogs*.

CATCH 'EM ALL

Can't find the 386th pokémon in *Pokémon Leaf Green/Fire Red*? Stop looking. It's not there. Nintendo have revealed that the only way to get hold of Deoxys is to go to a Pokéday at a VUE cinema with your GBA and your wireless adaptor. There you can download the Aurora Ticket with which you can visit Birth Island and defeat Deoxys. The Pokédays will be taking place here: Croydon Grants (October 8-9), Cheshire Oaks (October 15-16), North Finchley (October 22-23), Leeds (October 25-26), Leicester (October 27-28), Birmingham (October 29-30), Bristol Cribbs Causeway (November 5-6).

SEGA ANNOUNCE MORE DS GAMES

We've already told you about *Super Monkey Ball* on page 16, but Sega have also announced three more games for the handheld. They will be releasing a Doraemon RPG called *Doraemon: Nobuta's Dinosaur 2006* and a DS version of the arcade game, *Mishi King*. Also on the way is the rather less exciting *Sega Casino*, a compilation of casino games including roulette, craps and poker. Unfortunately there are no confirmed UK release dates for any of these games as yet, but we'll keep you posted.

POKE MYSTERY

We've got the first (sketchy) details on *Pokémon Mysterious Dungeon* for DS. Out on November 17th in Japan, it is being developed by Chunsoft and it will be an extension of their very own *Mysterious Dungeon* series, only this time starring pokémon. This means you'll be you'll be exploring poké-flavoured dungeons and searching for items.





△ Moo Moo farm in all its glory. Fingers crossed for Wario Stadium too.





△ We know about some new items, but how about some new racers too?

MARIO KART DS

From: NINTENDO **Out:** NOVEMBER


It's going to be a bit of a beast by all accounts. Weighing in at a meaty 32 tracks, *Mario Kart DS* looks set to be a substantial package. 16 retro tracks have been confirmed, alongside 16 brand new tracks, bringing the total amount of cups to a monstrous eight. Pleasingly, the retro cups remain true to the originals, with the SNES tracks featuring tighter, flatter circuits, and the N64 and Gamecube tracks featuring all the right bumps and banks in all the right places.

Nintendo have promised new tracks with more in the way of undulations and special features. One track for example, will play out over a massive pinball table, complete with flippers, bumpers and gigantic metal balls rolling around the track – to say there's going to be a staggering amount of variety here is something of an understatement.

As ever it's the multiplayer that's made *Mario Kart* such an enduring series, and it looks as though this will be the best yet. First and foremost, you'll be able to race against seven other human opponents without the need to daisy chain over eight hundred quid's worth of Gamecube hardware (although you'll all still have to be in the same room). And for online play, Nintendo will allow you to play three of your mates or set up games with strangers via a simple matchmaking service. In a rather nice touch, Nintendo have also decided to incorporate bots into the multiplayer modes - with both Versus and Battle modes playable against CPU controlled opponents.

Sadly Nintendo are still tight-lipped about specifics like new items, although we do know that some will take advantage of the dual screen system. One new item, for example, is called a Blooper. You can use this to squirt ink at an opposing player's top screen, blinding them, and forcing them to use the map screen to navigate. There'll be plenty more to look forward to, all of which we'll reveal in our review next month. Oh yes.



△ Here's hoping there'll be a rendition of the old classic, Koopa Beach 1.

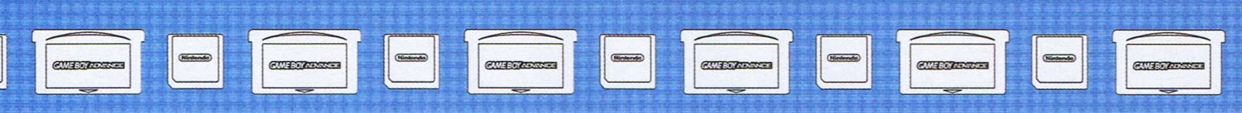


△ You have to hand it to Nintendo, even *Double Dash*'s Luigi Circuit has made the transition with great accuracy and – unbelievably – has hardly lost any detail.





△ The bottom screen comes in very handy, especially for green shells.







Grabbing a super powered mushroom allows you to grow to a ridiculous size, stomping everything (from enemies to blocks) foolish enough to get in your way.

NEW SUPER MARIO BROS

From: NINTENDO **Out:** TBC

New Super Mario Bros is an intentional homage to its past – something evident in the three playable levels we've had the privilege to get a hands-on with: the Forest (the typically green opening stage), the Desert and the Fortress (as 'Bowser's Castle' as you could hope for). All comfortingly familiar territory for Mario to put boot to Goomba as only a plumber can.

However, there are definitely differences here. 3D representations of the classic 2D objects being the most obvious, but what you can't see from the shots is the sweet physics at play. It looks classic, but it feels gorgeous.

Mario seems to have much more of a presence in his world, more of a connection – a rope's swing and the distance he can jump from it is relative to his position. Likewise, tightropes sag and bend and will fling him higher or lower depending on where Mario is across its length when he jumps – very much like in *Sunshine*. Nintendo has obviously put an awful lot of effort into getting the feel just right, and it's clearly working.

There are some very interesting new elements in here too, like levels that flip upside down and Mario's ability to retain three power-ups and swap between them at any time via the touch-screen.

At the same time many of the old magic touches have been kept, like finely tuned platforming challenges and level secrets. This is all tantalising enough, but the addition of a uniquely competitive two-player mode is the icing on the cake.

After a 13 year hiatus since the last true 2D *Mario* adventure, this really can't come soon enough.



The two-player mode is a very engaging race to the finish line.



So far we've only seen levels that are reminiscent of the older games.



A reworking of the incredible mine-cart level from the first game?



This looks amazing in motion, with enemies spiralling around you.

GUNSTAR FUTURE HEROES

From: TREASURE **Out:** NOVEMBER

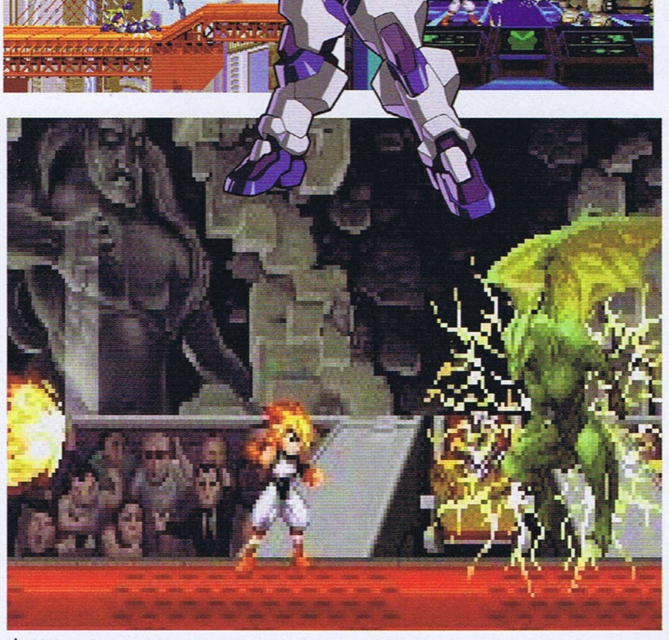
After a name change and THQ recently picking up the publishing duties, we thought now would be a good time to start evangelising what is quite literally the second coming of Treasure's much-loved shooter.

If you have ever played the original *Gunstar Heroes* on the Mega Drive, you don't need us to tell you how much you're looking forward to it (the puddle of urine by your shoes and the sweat running off your brow says it all), but if you've not, then let us educate you. *Gunstar Heroes* was (and quite possibly still is) the best side-scrolling shooter ever made. The action is all based around tiny manga characters unleashing hell-fury with a bunch of weapons that could be combined to create a new, more powerful arsenal.

On top of this, you could punch and kick your way through levels, grab anything that moves (including your co-op partner) and chuck them at each other in a blizzard of such sprite-scaling intensity that your brain would boil under pressure.

This time, Treasure, working on the confines of the GBA's tiny screen, have upped the ante where close combat is concerned. And, true to form, they will be delivering the same kind of prolific, inventive and jaw-dropping boss encounters that made its predecessor so loved. Take it from us, we're doing everything in our power to bring you that review as soon as humanly possible.





If there's one thing the previous game did exceptionally well, it was bosses: big bosses, mid-level bosses, super-screen-filling bosses… This will be no different.



△ Things start with a basic tennis ball – bigger balls have to be unlocked by accumulating trainer points via regular feeding and washing.







△ Jump! Jump! Bizarrely, the slight imprecision of the stylus makes it more realistic.

NINTENDOGS



FROM: NINTENDO | PLAYERS: 2 | SINGLE CART LINK: NO
MICROPHONE: YES | OUT: 6TH OCT | COST: £30

Sit! Sit! SIT! Probably not one to play on the bus, then…



△ Two puppies going mental for one length of chewed rope. Dogs: stupid.

N*intendogs* is not a game. Not in a stupid 'for life, not just for Christmas' way – it just isn't a game with a point or end or any guns and end of level bosses. Which we find a bit confusing, because our brains are used to talking about things like how skimpy the female characters' clothes are when reviewing games. So instead of us doing that, we've decided to tell you the story of our week of dog love – or 'wuv', if you're feeling soppy – in an attempt to show you how *Nintendogs* feels. Sound good? Okay, sit! And we'll begin.

Day 1: 12:00 We go to the kennels and get a dog – a fluffy King Charles spaniel called George. We wanted a miniature wolfhound, but we've got the Chihuahua edition and we only get six dogs to choose from.

We load up on food then spend the entire afternoon teaching him tricks. You do this by prodding him into the right position with a stylus. To make him sit, for instance, you use a sharp, downward-stroking motion from the top of his head, then you poke the little lightbulb icon that appears in the corner and give a command into the mic. Do this two or three times – with plenty of post-trick stroking – and he'll do the trick on command. By the end of the afternoon, George knows Sit, Lie Down and Roll Over. And Tom – who's sitting at the next desk – looks as if he wants to kill us.

19:16 We take George to a party. We were going to try to impress people with how well trained he is, but the music is a bit loud and he doesn't seem to recognise anything we're saying. This can be a problem whenever there's any background noise. Still, everybody's impressed – Ninty have

> "CUTER THAN A BABY DRESSED AS FATHER CHRISTMAS"



△ Most dogs are playful with each other, but you get the occasional vicious pairing – like Lucky and Mr Fluffles here.



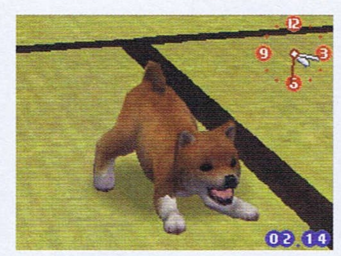




△ The noble pirate hat is the pinnacle of dog training – yours for 2,000 pts.

BAD DOG!

What to do when your pup goes wrong…



POKE THEM

There isn't any real discipline, but poking them on the paws is good – you can make them dance like a cowboy. Generally, zig-zagging motions are good, prodding bad.



STARVE THEM

Technically, your Nintendog can't die – it's not a Tamagotchi – but ill-fed dogs will start eating stuff they find on the floor, and even run away for a day or two if they're left alone.



ANNOY THEM

Tugging at your dog's lead during a leisurely stroll can do the trick – other good annoyances include snatching their food away and chucking frisbees at them.



FIND A BIGGER DOG

Whether it's on the streets or in the kennels, nothing says authority like leaving your chihuahua to play with a German shepherd. Some play nice; others don't…

obviously spent hundreds of hours tweaking the dogs' responses so they react realistically, and it makes them cuter than a baby dressed as Father Christmas.

Prod them on the nose and they sneeze, stroke their head and it tilts, rub their tummy and they writhe around with their tongues wagging. All the girls spend ages doing this – boys tend to rub George directly on his, ahem, gentleman's arrangements (which you can't really see – he's only a puppy), then shout 'Bad dog!' until we take the DS away from them. Also, everybody's very impressed by the blow-into-the-mic-to-make-bubbles dynamic. It's like magic!

Day 2: 21:00 Wake up and spend half an hour lying in bed tickling George's tummy and idly watching CD:UK. This is all very stress relieving – we start to wonder if having a Nintendog could prevent having a heart attack, like real dogs are supposed to.

We spend another twenty minutes teaching George to run around like a nutter when we shout 'Cheese it!' This is funny right up until the obedience competition when we can't get the tone of voice right and he doesn't listen. This is something you have to remember. Obedience isn't about volume in *Nintendogs* – yelling does absolutely no good – it's all about e-nun-ci-a-tion. If you say 'Sit!' in a cheery voice, you have to say it like that forever. We still win the competition, though, thanks to some sterling work on the Hold A Roll Over challenge (encouraged by loads of tickling) and a judge-pleasingly adorable Shake Hands in the freeform section. So we buy George some food, red ribbons for his hair and give him a nice, soapy shower. Then we spend 10 minutes playing a game with guns in and thinking about Maria Sharapova to reassure ourselves that we aren't turning into girls.

Day 3: 11:32 More stress relieving tummy-rubbing, followed by the most stressful half-hour of our lives. Killing Salazar was easy next to the nightmare of teaching George to jump. When he actually listens, there's only a split-second to tap the learn icon, and he keeps getting the little red



△ Most dogs love water, unless you spray it directly into their eyes.



△ Tatami matting is one of the improved interior design options available when you rack up the competition cash.



△ Sadly, dogs can't be walked together, so you'll have to take each one out separately. Which is rather irritating.



△ Why not cover your dog in ribbons, then parade it across the streets? Unless it's a boy, obviously. Then it'll be picked on mercilessly.

Confused icon because we've got a bit of a cold and don't always sound the same. It takes 35 minutes and 17 repetitions before he does it on command. So we play with a ball for a bit, but our hearts aren't really in it.

Day 3: 13:18 We enter the Frisbee competition. It's hosted by the same people as the Obedience competition, and we're even forced to click through exactly the same chatter again. We're hampered by the fact George can't actually catch a frisbee and finish last, so we spend the next walk trying to strangle George with his lead, but the worst we can do is make him squeak a bit by pulling him forwards too fast. Still, no bath tonight, pal.

Day 4: 23:41 We spend 45 minutes trying to teach George an advanced trick that we've done by accident – if you shout 'jump' while he's on his back, he flips onto his feet. He refuses to do it consistently. We

"EVERY BIT OF IT REEKS OF QUALITY (AND DOG MESS)"



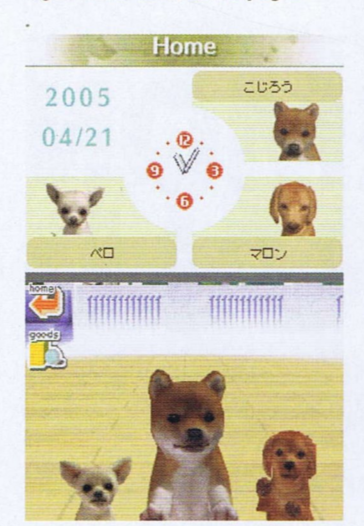


△ To go through a tube at speed, you have to tap the touch-screen rapidly across its entire length. It's an acquired skill…

△ The voice recognition works well, but it can get confused.



△ These wiry little chaps are a nightmare to train, but very agile.

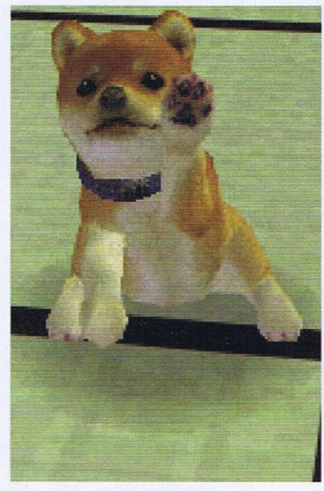


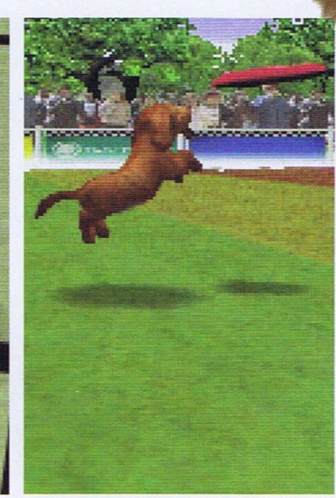
△ Tapping the screen calls every dog.



BEST IN SHOW

Entering the dog-eat-dog world of competitions.







SIT!

Obedience shows are the easiest places to shine. Your dog can remember 15 tricks – less if the tricks are complicated – but you only need basics like Sit, Lie, Stand and Shake Hands until the Expert Class. Some tricks have to be held for a set time, and at the end you get to show off a medley of your best

CATCH!

Frisbee competitions are best suited to bigger, faster dogs. It's partly about the throw, but points are awarded for distance and stylish catching technique. Rapid retrieval's the key – tap the screen, then shake the frisbee to make your mutt let go. Our advice: practise in the park first.

RUN!

Agility trials are for über-canines only. However frantically you double tap the hurdle, that chihuahua isn't going to make it over. But get a sheepdog or German shepherd and things get much easier – with the rapid taps on the screen cleverly mirroring the pace of a real dog show.

enter an Expert Class competition anyway, but finish fifth because we've forgotten to teach him Beg. It's a schoolboy error, but George still doesn't get any tea.

Day 5: 17:28 George still refuses to catch a frisbee, despite us honing our skills in the park. So we sell his nice collar and scrape the cash together to buy a sheepdog. Competition, that's the key. George *has* been getting complacent lately.

Teaching Bennet new tricks seems pointless, so we chuck a ball about for a bit. We refuse to pick up a brown steamer he leaves on the pavement because we're feeling naughty.

Day 6: 19:00 We take Bennet for a walk – by the way, it's a little bit annoying that you can't take both dogs at once, like you can in, say, real life – and we find a present on the street. Excellent stuff.

Day 6: 19:01 Humph. Honestly, what kind of person wraps up a broken camera with no film in it in a parcel, then leaves it lying around? We convince a friend to play Bark mode, and give them the broken camera – then we give them the red ribbons as well, because we feel guilty and Geraint says they make our dog look a bit camp. Now we're off to the dog show.

Day 7: 23:05 We come last and do an all-the-buttons reset in a fit of drunken rage. George is technically dead. We cry for ten minutes.

Day 8: 19:00 We go off to the kennels to buy some stuff.

And that's what *Nintendogs* is all about. Every bit of it reeks of quality (and dog mess, obviously) – and it's relentlessly addictive in a stressless, time-for-a-quick-walk sort of way. It's the perfect way of working out if your flatmate's a robot – only a heartless cyborg assassin wouldn't love these fluffy little pups – but it's not for those that are easily bored of endless, patient training and failure. Anyway, got to go – we've seen the most adorable velvet ruff for little Kramer…

JOEL SNAPE





△ This is Kramer. Look at his lovely face. We'll get bored of him soon…

△ This trainer's mum is the prize for the winner.

△ Still no proper battle animations. The monsters never actually touch.

△ As long as nothing evolves into a Mr Mime, everybody's happy.

POKÉMON EMERALD



FROM: NINTENDO **SAVE:** ON CART **PLAYERS:** 1-40 **OUT:** NOW **SINGLE CART LINK:** NO **COST:** £30

Having exhausted the rainbow, Pikachu rides off into the sunset…



After bankrolling Nintendo for more than seven years, it's time to bid farewell to the little game that could. And did – more times than we've been able to keep track of.

Through *Red, Blue, Green, Yellow, Gold, Silver, Crystal, Sapphire, Ruby, Leaf, Fire* and, finally, *Emerald* (our apologies to those we may have forogtten) the *Pokémon* experience has barely evolved across three different Game Boy formats.

But despite identical storylines and interchangeable characters, *Pokémon* remains such a compelling concept that each new version can be relied upon to sell far more copies than even the biggest, most expensively produced console titles. Even if kids rarely ambush one another for a holographic Raichu foil these days, *Emerald* has already racked up the kind of numbers that *Twilight Princess* could only dream of.

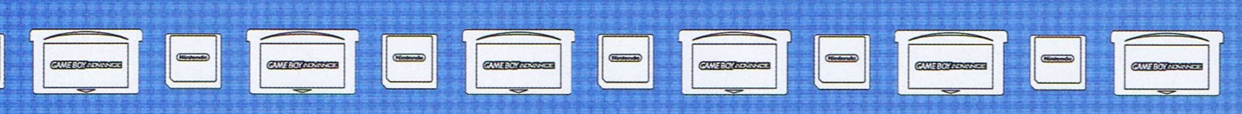
So it's goodbye GBA and hello DS. After *Emerald's* UK release, it seems we'll all have thrown our final Poké Balls on a Game Boy.

As ever, you'll have to be a commited Pokéfan to spot the differences between this and most of the previous versions. For those of you that don't know, Emerald is a fusion of *Ruby* and *Sapphire* with a few of the older monsters from the original titles thrown in, plus the wireless link-up feature from *Leaf Green* and *Fire Red.*

Thanks to the included wireless



△ Sadly you'll have many of these if you want to cross a patch of grass or walk through an underground passageway. Wild Zubat appeared! Groan…







△ There are loads of the more recent monsters, but you'll have to trade with *Leaf Green* and *Fire Red* to catch 'em all.



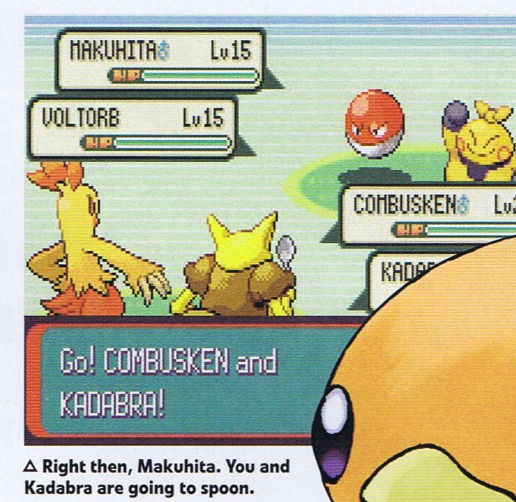




△ Thanks for the advice, dad.



△ You'll be wondering how these kids managed to conceal their 20-storey animal-fighting arena from the authorities.



△ Right then, Makuhita. You and Kadabra are going to spoon.

adapter, you can join a chatroom where up to 40 people can type away using the D-pad. Although if you're that close to 39 other *Emerald* players, you're probably bang in the middle of some *Pokémon* convention or event, and might as well just talk to your fellow trainers via the power of mouth. If anyone actually uses this feature, please let us know.

Some minor nips and tucks make the game a little more streamlined while failing to address issues such as the boxes of unskippable repeated text that pop up all the time, or the constant random combat that makes a two-minute walk last half an hour.

To get to the best new part, you have to finish the entire rest of the game, and unless you're a red-headed stepchild who's spent the last decade locked in the basement, you'll probably have seen it all before.

Despite our cynicism, it's still an extremely good game. The same game as always, but extremely good nonetheless. *Pokémon* still pushes all the right buttons. It's the ageless, sexless RPG that taps into our natural instinct to protect, nurture and explore, and nothing else comes close.

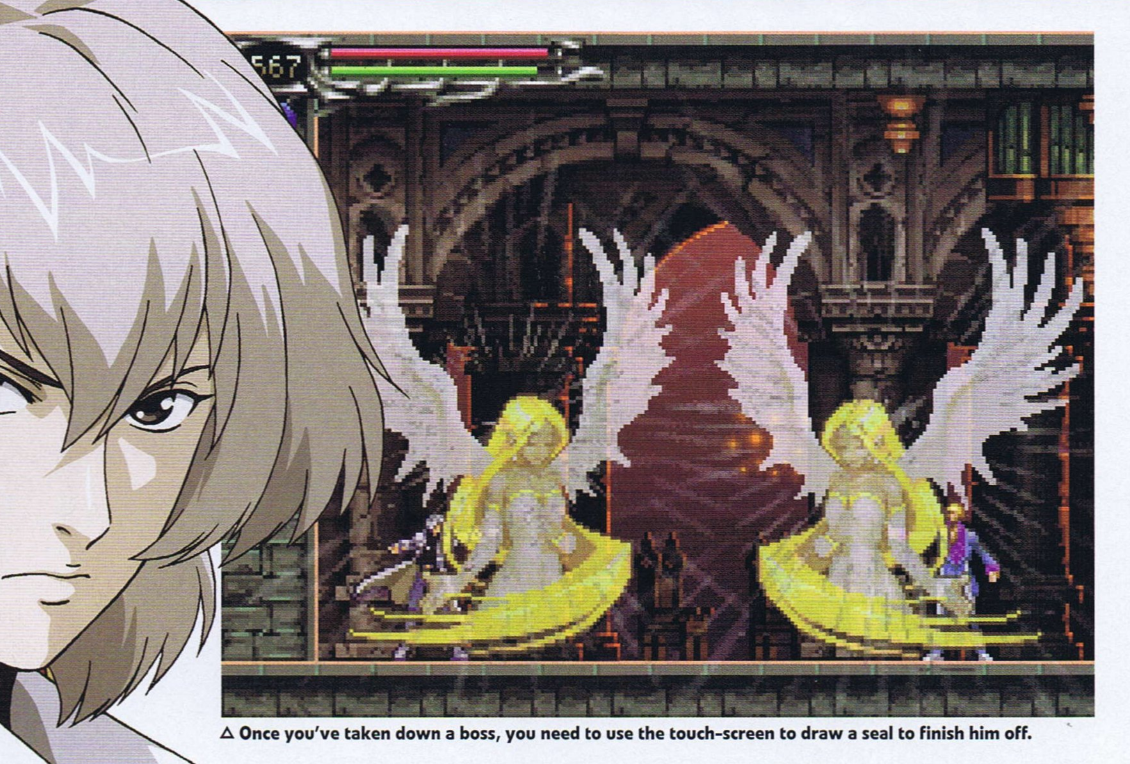
And so this is a fitting conclusion to *Pokémon's* Game Boy chapter – neither evolution nor revolution, *Emerald* is pure consolidation.

Reckon we'll be seeing you on DS, then.

MARTIN KITTS

4

"EMERALD IS A FITTING CONCLUSION TO POKÉMON'S GAME BOY CHAPTER"



△ Once you've taken down a boss, you need to use the touch-screen to draw a seal to finish him off.





CASTLEVANIA DAWN OF SORROW



FROM: KONAMI **PLAYERS:** 1 **SINGLE CART LINK:** NO
MICROPHONE: NO **OUT:** 30TH SEPT (UK) **COST:** £30

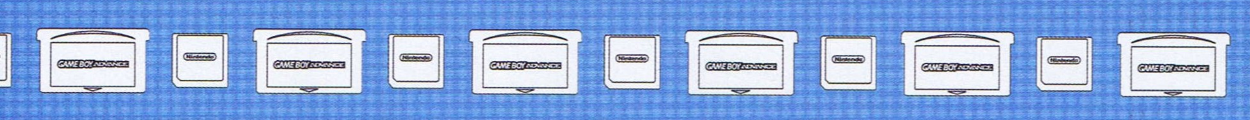
Vampire hunting's finest returns with a few new tricks up his sleeve.

For the uninitiated, it's easier to think of *Castlevania* as *Metroid* but with an atmosphere of horror and the occult. The game world is a seamless maze of corridors, chambers, tunnels and catacombs in which you're free to roam. Explore deeper into the castle and the enemies get tougher and areas that were previously locked become accessible when you find the correct items or abilities.

Everything is as you would expect from the series, then. As in previous games, your character's strength increases as you fight through the castle. By killing enemies you can level up, increasing attributes like health, magic stock and strength.

There's a staggering array of weapons available which you can find, buy and sell in the shop or upgrade by collecting the right materials. As a result, the sense of progression, of making yourself more and more powerful with each area explored is as compelling as it's always been.

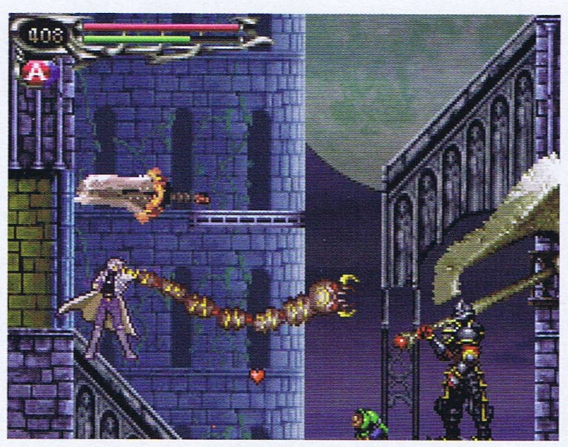
As well as this, there's an expanded version of *Aria of Sorrow's* system on the GBA. Once defeated, enemies drop Souls, which can then be placed into three different slots. The Bullet Soul emulates an enemy's attack, Guardian bestows magical







△ Soma has all manner of special abilities you can fiddle with.



△ Soul abilities can be used as Bullet attacks, which change depending on the enemy you fire them at.



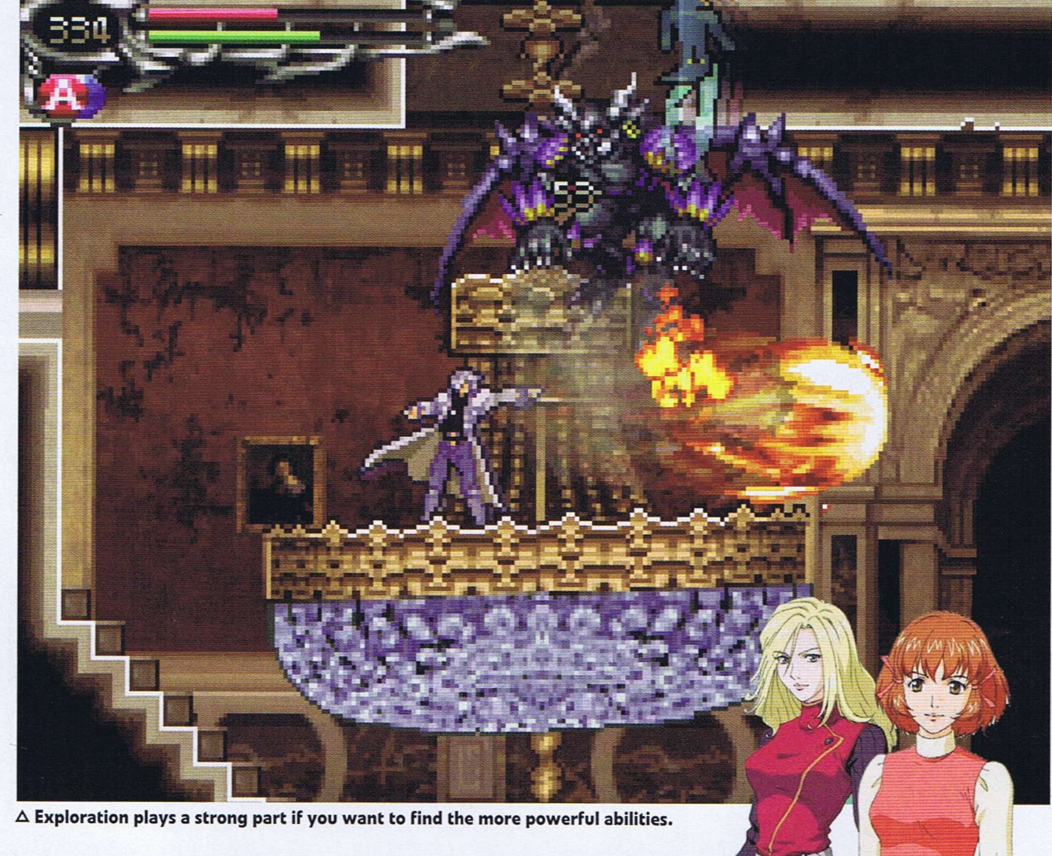
△ In the opening village you'll find a shop and an upgrade store.



△ Bosses leave little room for error.



△ The bosses are all very impressive.



△ Exploration plays a strong part if you want to find the more powerful abilities.

abilities like gliding from falls or slipping through gaps, and Enchant gives you a significant stat boost in areas like strength, intelligence or luck. Finding all the Souls in the game and creating custom move sets is one of *Dawn of Sorrow's* biggest assets, adding a satisfying level of depth to your adventure.

However, it's disappointing to see that *Dawn of Sorrow* doesn't use the DS's unique features particularly well. You use the touch-screen to direct attacks against specific enemies and, crucially, to draw special Seals that deliver a finishing blow to bosses, but aside from these more noticeable uses that's pretty much all there is to it.

"YOU USE THE TOUCH-SCREEN TO DIRECT ATTACKS AGAINST SPECIFIC ENEMIES"

In its defence, having a map on the bottom screen that you can check without having to pause is something of a luxury, albeit a small one, and the DS's extra power is frequently used to its advantage. For example, when fighting enemies, there are some lovely sprite scaling and rotation effects – These are particularly good in the boss battles, an area where *DOS* excels.

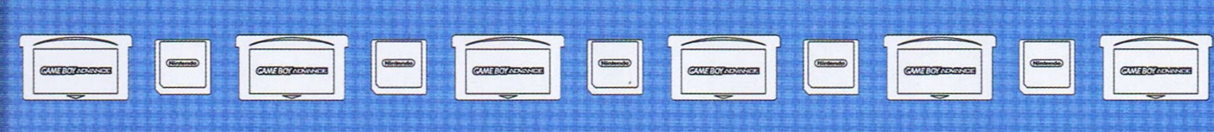
Add to this a wealth of extra content, like unlockable characters, three different endings (the last of which we're finding pretty punishing to obtain) and an interesting wireless mode that allows you to create mini-levels, and you're looking at another solid addition to the series.

GERAINT EVANS











△ Fights and challenges are accessed through the Map screen.



△ It looks very confusing, but you'll soon find it starts to make sense.



△ Finding, unlocking and organising all the characters will take forever.



△ The battle system, like *Smash Bros*, is easy to learn, but tough to master.



△ Each of these panels on the bottom screen is a Koma. These need to be unlocked and matched up before you can use them in the game.



△ There are over 150 characters to use, many of which we've heard of, most of which we haven't.





△ Each battle arena is presented as a comic page. You can even bust through the margin for ring-outs!

JUMP! SUPERSTARS



FROM: NINTENDO/BANDAI **MICROPHONE:** NO **PLAYERS:** 1-4 **OUT:** NOW (JAP) TBC (UK) **SINGLE CART LINK:** YES **COST:** ¥5300 (£25)

A Smash Bros clone with manga characters?

It might just work…



On a superficial level, *Jump! Superstars* is almost identical to *Smash Bros*, pitting a motley crew of characters against each other in a 2D arena. The action takes place on the top screen and skirmishes range from one on one battles to fights against three other opponents, all of which have a cast of characters that they can call upon to help dish out the smack. The person with the most KOs (as well as coins collected from the knockouts) wins the battle – sounds like familiar territory then, except… well it's not.

There's so much to *Jump!*, it's hard to explain. There's a *massive* compulsory tutorial, which takes you through every aspect of the game. You'll be thankful for it as there's a staggering array of moves, characters, combos and character types that all need to be mastered

You don't take control of one character, you control a team of individuals, and they're accessed, via the touch-screen, on a comic book panel showing images of characters in your group. The panel is a 4x5 grid of squares into which you can place Koma, tiles of different sizes and shapes that fit in the grid. As you battle through the game's challenges, you'll unlock more characters and Koma to place in the grid.

> **"FRIGHTENINGLY COMPELLING WITH A WEALTH OF DEPTH THAT SURPASSES EVEN SMASH BROS"**

This is where it gets tricky. Some Koma have squares missing from them, and so you have to match characters with their silhouetted Koma. Once you've completed a panel, it becomes active and you can use it in battle. Your touch-screen, then, must be constructed out of Koma of different shapes and sizes – some are playable characters that you control directly, others are support characters that jump in and out of battle to deliver special attacks, while the smaller Koma give active characters a special stat boost

So you need to think of a strategy before fighting. Do you want four playable characters with no power-ups or help, or one really powerful character with loads of support and stat boosts. This process of mixing and matching teams of characters is

△ You can actually use the Koma on the touch-screen as attack buttons – this is the key to finding some of the more powerful combos. It's all very easy to use.

△ As a rule, the bigger the Koma, the more powerful the character or effect.

frighteningly compelling, and exposes a wealth of depth that surpasses even *Smash Bros.* There are hundreds of characters and combos to explore, but the language barrier makes things tough.

Is it worth the struggle? If you're willing to put in the hours getting used to the menu screens and sifting through all the Koma, then yes. Behind the intimidating menu screens lies a truly magnificent beat-'em-up. It's fast, fluid, clearly presented and offers as much depth and challenge as you could want from a fighting game.

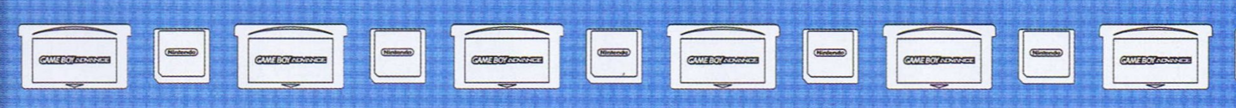
GERAINT EVANS

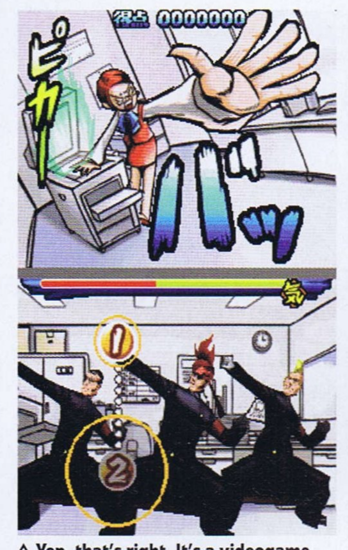
DUAL ★★★★

TOUCH ★★★★

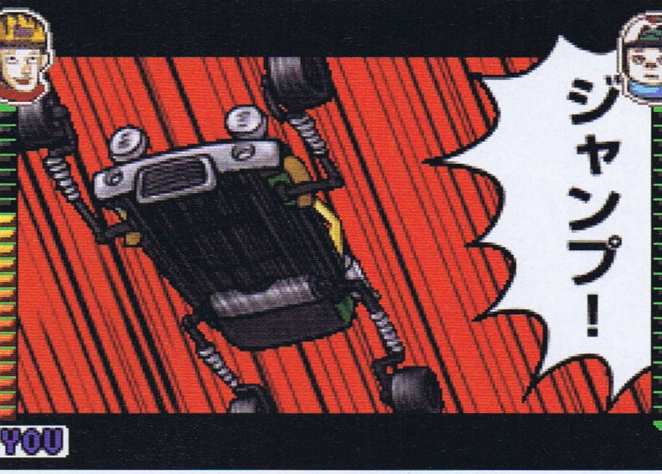
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△ Yep, that's right. It's a videogame that requires you to count to two.



△ The stories in two-player mode are even battier than those in the main game.

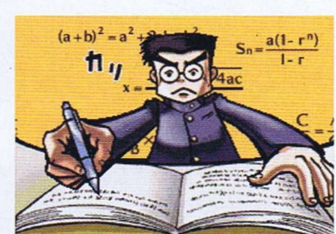


△ You don't need to read Japanese to understand the story before each song.

△ What could be better cheerleading-wear than a full length leather coat?



△ Each difficulty setting has its own super-shouty Ouendan team. Osu!



△ You can watch a replay of each song to get a better view of the cartoons.



OUENDAN



FROM: NINTENDO
MICROPHONE: NO
PLAYERS: 1-2
OUT: NOW (JAPAN) TBC (UK)
SINGLE CART LINK: NO
COST: ¥4800 (£24)

Cheerleaders, rhythm, action…

Have you ever lost a boss battle? Ever lost one twice in a row? 10 times in a row? Have you ever been left roaring in frustration, bouncing your controller off the wall, with your heart pounding away?

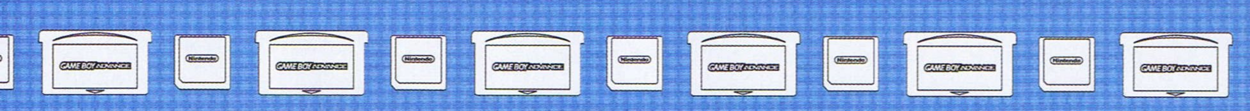
Even in those moments you know that you'll never win that way. You need to take a breath, wipe down your palms and begin again – stop feeling like a loser and decide to be a winner. It's easier said than done, but it's always worth the effort. *Ouendan* is a game about how that moment feels.

Because it's not just tough bosses that leave you feeling that way. Maybe you're a chef whose restaurant is failing to attract any customers. Maybe you've got an exam tomorrow but your stupid family won't let you study in peace. Maybe you've got a crush on your boss at work, but they only ever see you stressed, hassled and sweaty. All situations that make you feel defeated, but all situations that could be fixed – if you only had a little encouragement.

That's where the Ouendan come in. They're a cheerleading squad and their job is to go around town helping people who are at the end of their tether. But what use is a cheerleading squad without any music to cheer to?

So, in an innovative twist on the standard rhythm action game, you accompany the Ouendan on each of their visits, and use the touch-screen to tap along to the songs they're performing to. Each disc that appears is numbered, and must be tapped in order just as the indicator circle closes in on it.

It seems complicated on paper, but it's wonderfully simple on screen – instinctive and satisfying. The effects of your cheerleading efforts are shown as animations on the top screen as the Ouendan help each











△ You may want to improvise a longer stylus with a pencil or something so you can always see the screen.



△ Despite their jobs, the Ouendan don't look like a cheery bunch.



△ Sorting out people's lives proves very satisfying.



△ Failing a level is truly painful. You've not just let yourself down, you've let the Ouendan down and they've let the desperate person down. It's like a guilt combo.

person through their troubles. It's probably the most feel-good game ever made: in order to win you have to make people happy. The music – all Japanese rock and pop – is surprisingly loveable, the cartoons are hilarious and the styling is brilliant. This is gaming at its best: inventive, irresistible and entertaining.

But that's not to say it's easy, as your health bar is continuously draining away and only by tapping each disc in perfect, crisp rhythm can you top it up and stay alive. If it dips below half, your cheerleading powers fade, and things start going wrong for the people you're trying to help. If you miss several beats in a row it's an almost certain game over.

The initial difficulty setting is actually fairly easy, but later levels – which feature entirely new patterns of beats and notes – will take real perseverance and patience until you learn them off by heart. In fact, the hardest setting will have you roaring in frustration, bouncing your DS off the wall and your heart pounding will be away. Does that sound familiar? That's when you need the Ouendan. Life will never be the same again. Osu!

MARGARET ROBERTSON

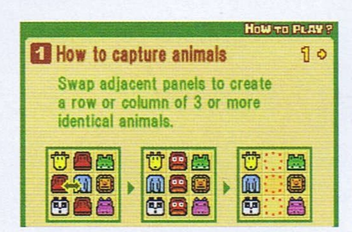
DUAL ★★★★★
TOUCH ★★★★





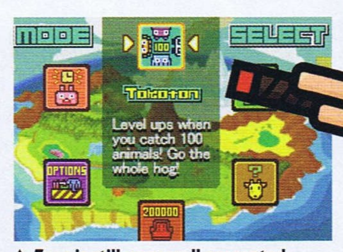

Like the DS version, capturing a level's luck animal will earn you bonus points.











Zooo is still very well presented.

ZOOO



FROM: IGNITION **PLAYERS:** 1 **SINGLE CART LINK:** NO
SAVE: ON CART **OUT:** NOW **COST:** £20



After playing this on the DS we were worried that *Zoo Keeper* wouldn't make the transition from the DS's super-intuitive stylus control to the GBA's slightly clumsier D-pad. But it turns out our fears were unfounded. At its heart the game remains the same – a simplistic process of shifting animals in pairs until they match up in groups of three or more.

It takes some getting used to after playing the DS version, but it works well enough and almost makes *Zooo* feel like a different game. Whether this is for better or for worse is actually difficult to say.

With the stylus, you used your brain and your eyes as you searched the screen for scoring opportunities. But without it you have to use your fingers more, and this has a large effect on the gameplay, because you have to physically track and move the cursor to the desired location.

In some respects, *Zooo* on GBA feels more involving and much harder, which we reckon is a good thing. It proves just as addictive as it is on DS, and should be checked out by anyone who's yet to invest in the dual-screen handheld.

GERAINT EVANS

4

ANIMANIACS
LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION



FROM: IGNITION **PLAYERS:** 1-4 **SINGLE CART LINK:** YES
MICROPHONE: NO **OUT:** NOW **COST:** £30



There comes a time when this kind of rubbish just merges together in our memory like one big, horrible smudge. There's nothing new here and there certainly isn't anything clever.

Animaniacs is an isometric platformer where you shamble about collecting meaningless trinkets and dispatching enemies, using a charmless bunch of freaks who would be better off as roadkill.

While there's nothing wrong with it, technically speaking, we can't imagine anyone getting basic enjoyment out of flipping switches, pushing boxes and solving basic puzzles. Sure, the levels all look different from zone to zone, but actually playing it rarely offers anything approaching excitement.

To make matters worse, the perspective is a bit of a hindrance, as simplistic platforming tasks often end in frustrating deaths. The only thing we can level in its defence is the mildly enjoyable multiplayer Battle mode, but that in itself isn't worth the price of entry.

GERAINT EVANS

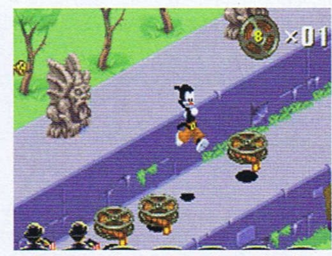
> "RARELY OFFERS ANYTHING APPROACHING EXCITEMENT"





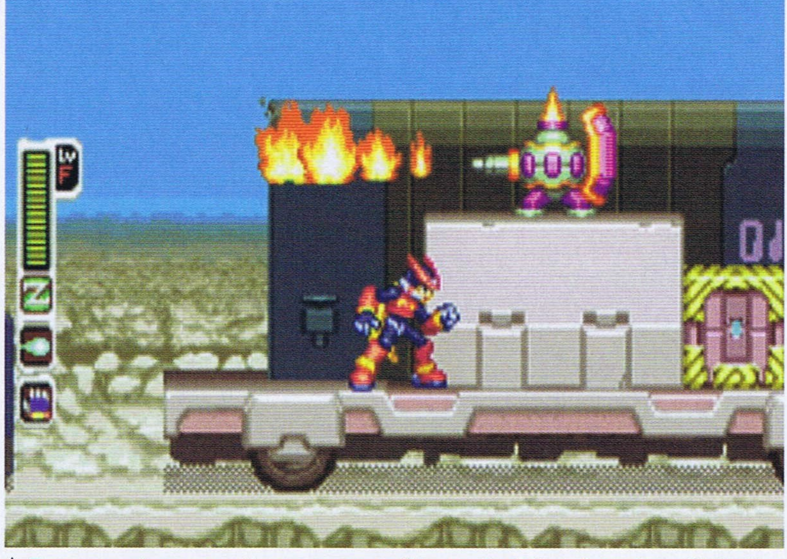
Although all the levels have different themes to them, they play the same – they're all generally unexciting, uninspiring and periodically frustrating.


Aiming projectiles is fiddly and offers little in the way of satisfaction.


Do we really need another collecting marathon with 'amusing' minigames?



△ Do you really care? In between each level you'll have to go back to your truck for a chat with the team. It's very, very dull.



△ The gun turrets are worse than any enemy as they can shoot at you from above. Obviously you can't angle a shot to destroy it, so you need a quick trigger finger when you leap.



△ Pick up parts and combine them to form new weapons.



△ You might like to shoot that enemy above, but you can't. Not until he drops.



△ For the first level you're shooting on a moving truck. It's like a Megaman western.

MEGAMAN ZERO 4



FROM: CAPCOM **PLAYERS:** 1 **SINGLE CART LINK:** NO **SAVE:** ON CART **OUT:** NOW **COST:** £25

It's time for the Man to grow up.



Sometimes it can be a good thing that game characters don't move with the times. Look at Mario – if he'd moved with the times he'd probably, like Sonic and pretty much every other platform character, have a gun rather than a water cannon and be shooting the crap out of Mega Mole.

Having said that, would it be so bad if Zero realised it was 2005? If, after 60-odd *Megaman* games, the main man actually learned how to duck? Also, if you were to employ someone to save Neo Arcadia from the clutches of the evil Dr Weil, you might go for someone who could shoot upwards. But that's Megaman – forever stuck in 1987.

Despite the lack of ducking or new shooting skills, there are some new features. You can now nick weapons from enemies and combine them with items to form new ones. Also, you can now customise your elf, so if you're prone to getting a kicking you can use a Nurse elf to heal you. Finally, you can also change the weather to make levels easier – snow will cover dangerous spikes, for example.

> **"ANOTHER 2D SCROLLING SHOOTER THAT WON'T WORRY THE LIKES OF METAL SLUG"**

Other than that it's another 2D scrolling shooter that won't worry the likes of *Metal Slug*. With such few enemies, you never really feel the stress and panic that comes with playing the classic scrolling shooters. Instead all you feel is annoyance when you remember that you can't crouch and shoot the enemy who has popped out from the floor or gun down the turrets that are blasting your head from above. Add that to a wealth of dialogue that would make *Metal Gear* blush and you've got a painfully average shooter.

Of course there is an argument that messing with Megaman's skills would annoy hardcore fans, but then we didn't hear many people complaining about Capcom updating the *Resident Evil* series.

TOM EAST

2



All the latest and greatest DS and GBA cheats, tips and secrets...

TIP OF THE MONTH

POKEMON EMERALD

There are 386 monsters to unlock in Pokémon Emerald. Find out how to catch the secret ones right here.

ALTERING CAVE
You can enter this secret cave on Route 103 after beating the Elite Four. You'll also unlock the Battle Frontier after beating them.

POKEMON DIPLOMA
Catch all 202 pokémon in your Pokédex. Then go to the hotel in Lilycove City and talk to the Game Designer.

NATIONAL POKEDEX DIPLOMA
Capture all 386 pokémon in your Pokédex, then go to the hotel in Lilycove City and talk to the Game Designer.

BATTLE STEVEN IN METEOR FALLS
When you've defeated the Elite Four, a new area of Meteor Falls will open in the northwestern corner. You can find Steven here with his high 70s pokémon.

SECRET POKEMON

BELDUM
Visit Steven's house once you have beaten the Elite Four.

CASTFORM
Beat the rival team at the weather institute.

CHIKORITA, CYNDAQUIL OR TODODILE
Professor Birch will call you on your Pokénav when you have beaten the 200 pokémon of Hoenn.

DEOXYS
Get the Aurora Ticket (check out the news on page 40 to see how) and go to Birth Island.

GROUDON
Beat the Elite Four and go to the Land Lair.

HO-OH/LUGIA
Pick up the Mystic Ticket and then go to Navel Island.

KYOGRE
Beat the Elite Four and go to the Sea Lair.

LATIOS OR LATIAS
Beat the Elite Four, then go downstairs in your house and watch the TV. Or mix records with a *Ruby* or *Sapphire* pokémon and go to Southern Island.

MEW
Pick up the Old Sea Chart and travel to Faraway Island.

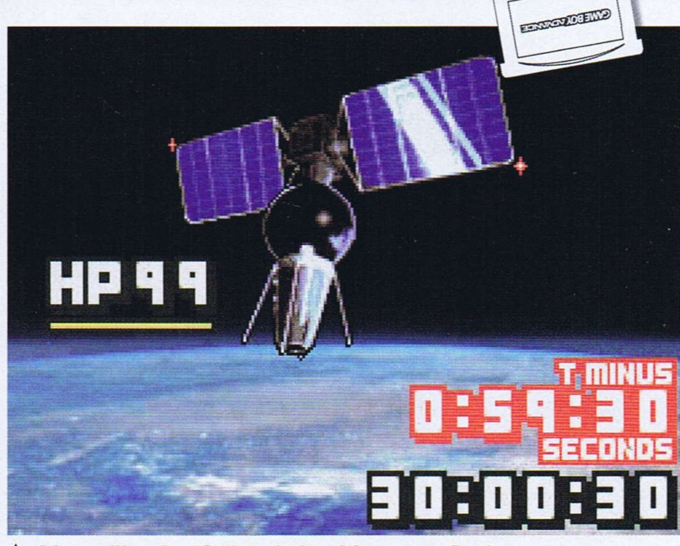
RAYQUAZA
Get Magma and Aqua to entice Kyogre and Groudon out of the cave. Then go to the Sky Pillar.

TREEKO, TORCHIC, OR MUDKIP
Help Professor Birch escape from the wild pokémon.

△ Beat the Elite Four to unlock stuff.



△ Finding 386 takes a few minutes.



△ *Advance Wars: Dual Strike* is the best DS game yet. Buy it now.

ADVANCE WARS DUAL STRIKE



Unlock Three Star Forces
Complete the Normal Campaign and you can use three of the Star Forces (Eagle Eye, Gear Head, and Conqueror) with any Rank 1 character or higher.

Unlock Money Champion
Complete Basic Money Survival Course.

Unlock Time Champion
Complete Basic Time Survival Course.

Unlock Turn Champion
Complete the Basic Turn Survival Course.

Unlock Character Wallpapers
Complete Campaign mode to unlock wallpapers for the three COs you used most frequently during your campaign. Select them from the Display menu.

Unlock Hard Combat Mode
Complete Combat mode.

Unlock Mistwal and Soul Of Hachi Powers
Complete the Hard Campaign. Mistwal gives you first strike when you're attacked during a Super CO Power. Soul of Hachi allows you to deploy units from allied cities during a Super CO Power.

Unlock Advance Wallpaper, Hachi's Land and Nell's Land
Insert an *Advance Wars* GBA cart and you can buy them in the shop.

Unlock Lash's Land Map and Strum's Land Map
Insert an *Advance Wars 2* GBA cart and you can buy them in the shop.

Unlock Oozium
Complete Mission 22 and buy it from Battle Maps for 1000 credits.

Unlock Alternative Costume
Reach level 10 with your CO and purchase CO Edit from Hachi. The costume will be available from the CO Edit menu.

Unlock Gallery and Soundroom
Complete the Normal campaign and buy them from Hachi.

Unlockable COs
Buy these from Haichi once you've completed the relevant mission.

Adder, Hawke, Lash and Flak
Complete Means To An End in the Normal Campaign (cost: 1000 points each).

Grimm
Complete Crystal Calamity in the Normal Campaign (cost: 600 points).

Hachi and Nell
Complete the Normal Campaign with an A rank (cost: 2000 points).

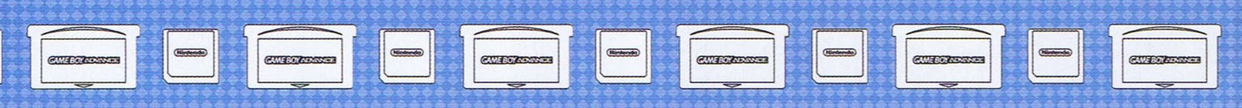
Javier and Sasha
Complete Crystal Calamity in the Normal Campaign (cost: 600 points).

Juggler
Complete Means To An End in the Normal Campaign (cost: 3000 points).

Kindle and Koal
Complete Means To An End in the Normal campaign (cost: 3500 points).

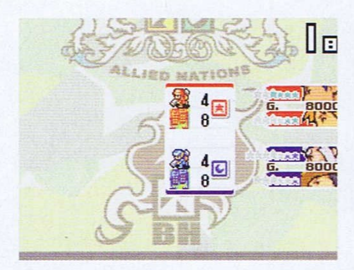
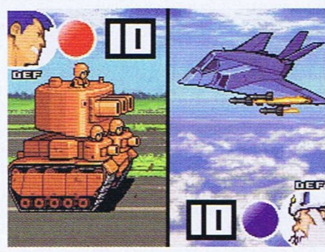
These COs can only be used in Combat mode.

Adder
Complete Normal Combat Level 5.




SEND US YOUR SECRETS

Have you found a secret in *Pokemon Emerald*? Maybe you've got a helpful hint for *Nintendogs*. If you have found any good secrets or smart tricks in any of your DS or GBA games, we want to hear from you. Send us your secrets and we'll print the top 10 every month, and the best entry will win a game. But, be warned: if we catch you cutting and pasting cheat codes from the internet, we'll get rather cross. Post your entries to Pocket Tips, **NGC**, Future Publishing, 30 Monmouth Street, bath, BA1 2BW. Or Email your entries to ngc@futurenet.co.uk (title the email Pocket Tips).

△ There's loads of stuff to unlock.



△ It's like having your own dog without any of the disgusting smells.



△ Earn Trainer Points to unlock dogs.

Flak
Complete Normal Combat Level 3.

Hawke
Complete Normal Combat Level 6.

Lash
Complete Normal Combat Level 4.

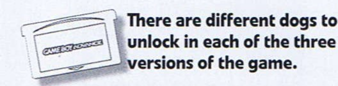
Unlockable Bonus Missions
Mission 11: Black Boats
During Mission 10, capture the city to the east of your HQ.

Mission 14: Black Bombs
During Mission 13, capture the city in the northeast corner.

Mission 17: Spiral Garden
Find the Snow Hunters map in Mission 16. It's hidden in the southeastern city, on the small island with the com tower.

Unlock Special Design Map
Hold L and R and select Map Design mode. You'll unlock a map with the words 'Advance Wars' spelled out on the land.

NINTENDOGS



There are different dogs to unlock in each of the three versions of the game.

CHIHUAHUA VERSION
Unlockable Dogs

Beagle
16,000 Trainer Points.

Dalmation
Find a fireman's hat on a walk.

Golden Retriever
10,000 Owner Points.

Miniature Schnauzer
14,000 Owner Points.

Pinscher
2000 Owner Points.

Siberian Husky
4000 Owner Points.

Toy Poodle
8000 Owner Points.

Welsh Corgi
20,000 Trainer Points.

DACHSHUND VERSION
Boxer
20,000 Trainer Points.

Cavalier King Charles Spaniel
8000 Trainer Points.

Dalmatian
Collect a fireman's hat while on a walk.

Jack Russell Terrier
Find the Jack Russell book while on a walk.

Miniature Schnauzer
16,000 Trainer Points.

Pembroke Welsh Corgi
10,000 Trainer Points.

Shetland Sheepdog
14,000 Trainer Points.

Shiba Inu
4000 Trainer Points.

Toy Poodle
22,000 Trainer Points.

Yorkshire Terrier
2000 Trainer Points.

LABRADOR VERSION
Beagle
14,000 Trainer Points.

Boxer
10,000 Trainer Points.

Cavalier King Charles Spaniel
22,000 Trainer Points.

Dalmatian
Find a fireman's hat while on a walk.

German Shepherd
4000 Trainer Points.

Golden Retriever
20,000 Trainer Points.

Siberian Husky
30,000 Trainer Points.

Jack Russell Terrier
Find the Jack Russell book while on a walk.

Pug
2000 Trainer Points.

Shetland Sheepdog
16,000 Trainer Points.



△ *Mario Smash Football* with dogs.

Shih Tzu
8000 Trainer Points.

Ranch House
25,000 Trainer Points.

Yorkshire Terrier
35,000 Trainer Points.

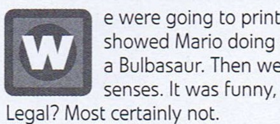


NGC POCKET

END BIT • END BIT • END BIT

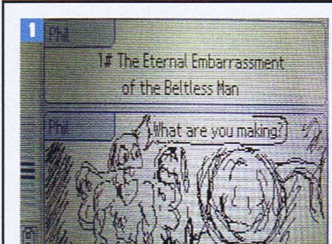
PICTO ANIMATIONS

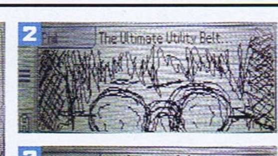
Displaying the fruits of your imaginations…



We were going to print a series of images that showed Mario doing unspeakable things to a Bulbasaur. Then we came to our freakin' senses. It was funny, yes. Printable? Hardly. Legal? Most certainly not.

There isn't a month that goes by without some sicko somewhere sending us an image so horrifying it makes even Kittsy screw his face up in disgust. Seriously, though guys, we can't print that kind of filth. Even when you say 'please print this in the mag' at the end of the email. You know who you are.



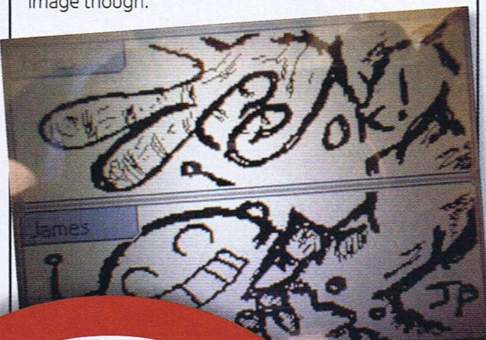






WHAT THE?

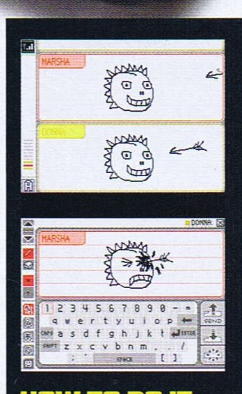
Courtesy of James Phillips from Swindon comes this pair of frankly disturbing images. The first, entitled Cough, features a man with a kettle on his head (where do you guys get this stuff from?) accompanied by some creative licence with the English language. Classy. The next? A Discobot – nothing too unusual there admittedly. Nice image though.



BELTS!

We were a little bit confused by this one. You see, the artist's email address suggests to us his name is BunnyBroiler (an interesting surname if ever we saw one), but he signed off his message as Gareth. And then, just to make our brains hurt, the name on the Pictochat messages in the image is Phil. Is he suffering some kind of identity crisis? Who is Phil, and does he know you have his DS? What on earth was going though his mind (other than belts) when he drew it? Why do feel we the need to have a lie down? We may never know…





HOW TO DO IT…

1. *Draw a little picture of something and then click on Send.*
2. *Now copy that picture back into your drawing board and make a little change to it before sending it again.*
3. *Now copy that picture onto your drawing board again, and edit it for the third frame in the animation. Keep sending and copying your picture back and forth, making all your little changes along the way.*
4. *The amount of space you have left in the message log is shown by the meter to the left-hand side. Keep an eye on it.*
5. *Once you've finished the final frame of your animation, press the up arrow to flick back through the message log until you reach the top.*
6. *Now hold down the left shoulder button and then half a second later, hold down the right shoulder button.*

NGC POCKET

NOW IT'S YOUR TURN!

We want your Pictochat artwork

Pictochat is a wonderful tool. Made to be used, but born to be abused. If you've created an animation or piece of artwork that you feel the world has to see, then send it in, but be sure to check out the following instructions. As you can't save your pictures on the DS, this is what we'd like you to do. When you've finished with your Pictoart, turn the lights off, take a photo with a digital camera and send it as an email (titled Pictoart) to **ngc@futurenet.co.uk**. If you haven't got access to a digital camera, just send a normal photograph to:
Pictoart, **NGC** Magazine 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, BA1 2BW.



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OUR PROMISE

Our reviewers are the most talented and knowledgeable Nintendo fans in the business. We don't only play games at work – we play them at home too, just like you. We ensure that we've played games through to the end so that we can give you a proper verdict – and one that saves you from wasting money.

NGC THE VERDICT YOU DESERVE! REVIEWS

SPARTAN TOTAL WARRIOR

Absolute carnage on the streets of ancient Greece. Kittsy taught it everything he knows about mass homicide. Huge six page review. P64

FIFA '06

As regular a fixture as Paul's mid-morning bowel movements… P70





PLUS!



SONIC GEMS COLLECTION

More hedgehog-based retro nonsense from Sega. Has he stood the test of time? P74

TIGER WOODS 2006

The King of Swing is going through a few changes, but are they for the better? P76

SCOOBY DOO UNMASKED

The sandwich-scoffing hound returns for another adventure. P78

NFL/NHL/NBA

An American sport triple bill. Three reviews, three verdicts, starting over on… P80

OUR SCORING SYSTEM

0-24
■ Crushingly awful, massively dull. Rest assured this game is absolute crud.

25-49
■ A disappointing title, stashed with nasty faults and likely to be short on any quality.

50-74
■ Some great bits, some not-so great bits. Decent but definitely problems.

75-89
■ Great fun, brilliantly programmed at times, but probably flawed.

90+
■ Rarely awarded, a 90+ is essential. Buy with confidence.

NGC STAR GAME

MEET THE NGC TEAM

What Sport should EA secure the licence for next then chaps ?



TOM E
"It would be nice if they made a football game." Eh? They already have. "Not a great one, they haven't." Fair point.



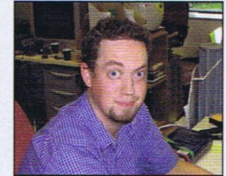
MARTIN
"How about Paula Radcliffe's Marathon 200X with unlockable extras, like crying and urinating minigames". Classy.



PAUL
"Is there a sport that involves sweaty ladies, mud and VW camper vans?" Not that we know of. "Well there should be."



GERAINT
"What's this 'sport' then?" Well, you know that stuff you do in Wales with the leeks and the wellies? It's like that only legal. "Oh."



TOM S
"How about a BMX game?" Why? Would it be 'rad', Tom? To the 'X-tr3m3'? 'Like totally si…' "Why don't you all just shut the hell up?"



GREENER
"How about 'Can You Please Put Me The Right Way Up Before I Pass Out 2005'?" Can't really see that catching on, Greener.

"Nothing but a killing machine"



△ This bloke is probably an ally of sorts, so we'll spare him for a level or two.

△ Nice arterial spray. The bodies stick around, but you can't abuse them.

△ Spartan's lust for killing Romans is matched only by his love for destroying stuff.



△ When the chimes of the Mr Whippy van echo through Sparta there's a mad rush to be first in the queue for a 99 Flake and a bottle of pop. You can't lick dignity.



△ The ballista is a kind of Roman artillery thing that fires explosive arrows capable of destroying large numbers of Roman soldiers. They didn't think this one through.

SPARTAN TOTAL WARRIOR

He's no partial warrior – he's a *total* warrior, which is why they made a game all about him. Read on…

△ A traditional Spartan welcome for some Roman visitors – a family size tub of boiling tar over their heads.

INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	SEGA
DEVELOPER	CREATIVE ASSEMBLY
RELEASE DATE	7TH OCT
PLAYERS	1
MEM. CARD PAGES	1
GBA LINK-UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	NO
WIDESCREEN	NO
COST	£40

Imagine being named after the place where you live. Your parents might as well have marked your birth certificate 'Punchbag' or 'Future Serial Killer' because that's all you could hope to amount to.

"So what are you doing after school then?"

"Well, I thought I'd beat the crap out of Bognor Regis again."

"Sweet. Mind if I tag along? And can the rest of the class come too?"

But spare your pity for poor Spartan. Being named after a city famed solely for its rock-hard warriors has its benefits, not least in your enemies' knowledge that having reached adulthood, you'll have a lot of anger to pay back.

Spartan: Total Warrior is the tale of our eponymous hero and the few thousand Romans unlucky enough to meet him on a day when his childhood of hurt weighed heavily on his mind.

Because Spartan is nothing but a killing machine. The only way his countrymen could have designed a more effective method for relieving Romans of their limbs would have been to attach giant razor blades to an aeroplane propeller. And because flight had not been invented – and a propeller might have had trouble bending down to light the occasional bomb fuse – Spartan would be guaranteed a regular supply of work, at least until Rome was completely empty.

> "BEING NAMED AFTER A CITY FAMED FOR ITS WARRIORS HAS ITS BENEFITS"



△ The king is barely able to wipe his own bum, let alone defend himself without Spartan's help.

MIGHT AND MAGIC

Dismembered bits and magic tricks, together at last



■ When you see a gigantic green beam of pure green magic green power, do like Spartan does. Run for it.



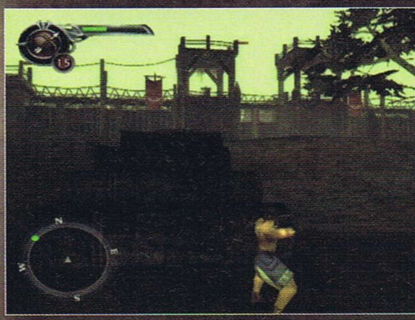
■ The same applies if you see a gigantic blue beam of pure blue magic blue power, although not quite so much.



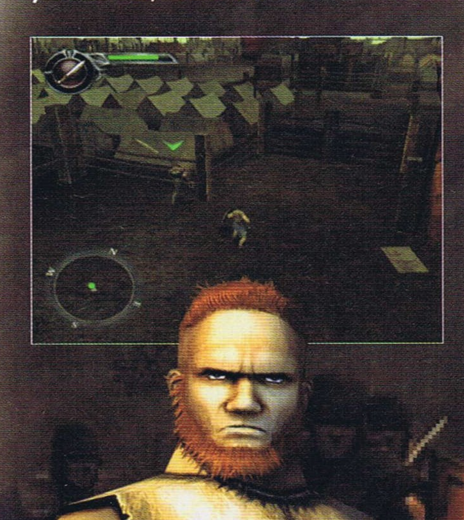
■ Roman magic looks good, but this huge reanimated statue is all sack and no nuts. He goes down after just three hits.



■ Even Spartan himself gets in on the David Blaine act from time to time. Can you feel the magic yet, Romans?



△ Sadly you can't just aim your arrows wherever you want. Well, we couldn't do it.





△ Spartan's arrows lock on to their targets automatically. You don't get much ammo, so a few bursts of multiple flaming arrows will deplete your stock in no time at all. Swords and axes are much more effective.

BASHFUL

Use the D-pad to switch between weapons during a fight, if you can find a spare nanosecond without some Roman fool running up and knocking you on the head with a large piece of metal. Different weapons have different fighting styles. Some go 'bashy-bash' while others go 'bish-bashy-bosh'.

This meaty brand of slaughter is conveyed through the mists of time and onto our televisions via the trusted medium of button bashing. The developers will hate us for saying this, since when we spoke to them they made sure to point out the non-bashy, all-skillsy nature of *Spartan: Total Warrior's* combat, but put the controller in our hands and those buttons are going to take a spanking.

We found it impossible to play any other way. You may well be able to block an enemy's blow and deliver an immaculately timed counter, as we often unwittingly did, but if you reckon you can do it when you can't even *see* Spartan amid the 100-strong crowd of furious combatants, you've probably been working on the game for the last two years.

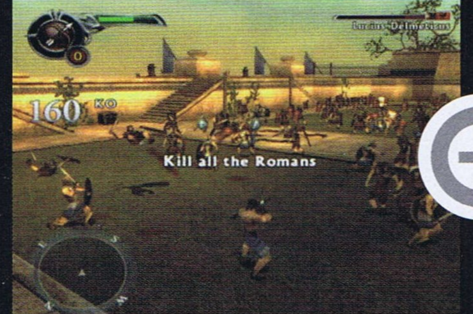
> EVERYWHERE YOU LOOK, ROMANS POUR OVER CASTLE WALLS AND INVADE ROOMS

Anyway, regardless of how it is achieved, the result is much the same – oodles of rapid-fire killing and the satisfaction of hacking up enemies that are more numerous than in

BLOODTHIRSTY WORK

This is why Spartan doesn't really have any mates…

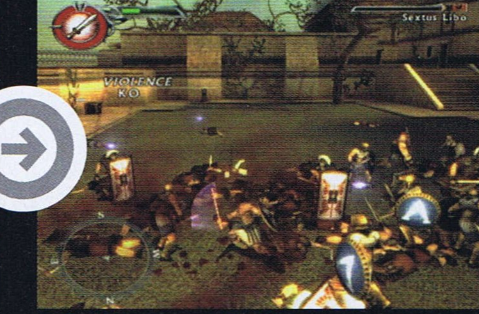
FEAR THE REAPER



△ Watch out, Romans. The objective is the same in every level – those Romans need things amputated.



△ Note how Spartan's current victim's name is displayed in the top right. Huh huh – Quintus.



△ For having a name like Sextus, you *deserve* a Violence KO. So do your smart-arse parents.

WISE COMMANDER



△ 'A weapon that turns men to stone? Yeah, right. The other one's got bells on, suckers.'



△ 'Get stuck into 'em, boys! We'll show those damn Romans how we treat dirty liars in Old Sparta!'



△ "Erm…"

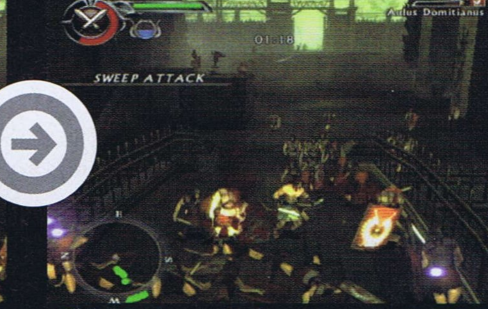
ROMAN HOLIDAY



△ Sorry, but this guy just has a thing against Romans. Keep him away from automatic weapons.



△ Still, there's something quite funny about the way he whirls around with a sword in each hand.



△ He's like a human food processor with the lid off. This is why Spartan doesn't wear many clothes.

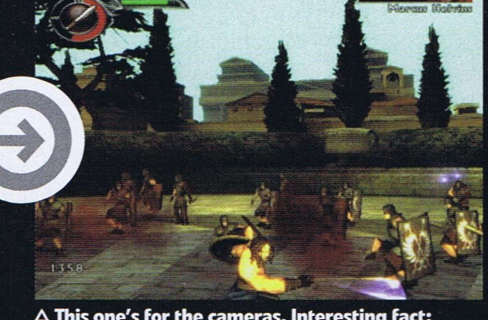
R&R



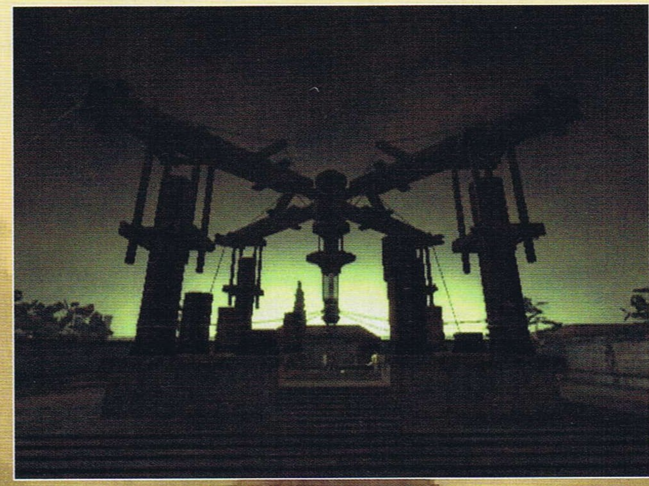
△ When he isn't slaughtering Romans for the glory of Sparta, this is what our hero does for fun.



△ He gathers some Romans at the arena his dad built for him in the back garden and gets busy.



△ This one's for the cameras. Interesting fact: Spartan washes his hair in blood, for extra shine.



△ It's the Medusa machine, just like in the Rocky Horror Show – except this one has the actual Medusa sitting in the middle, looking hissed off. Ha!



△ Somebody's getting buzzed.



△ A great counter. Good work.



△ Titus Decius became Titus Deceased after his first meeting with Spartan.

any game that has gone before. Everywhere you look, Romans pour over castle walls and invade rooms via unseen doorways. Sometimes you'll have some Spartan allies to help out, but most of the Romans go straight to Spartan (the man), for the fastest possible ticket to the afterlife.

When you've sliced and diced enough people in the current area, you'll be able to move somewhere else for a battle in alternative surroundings. Health and the little used magic power are topped up by praying at altars along the way, although the sneaky Romans tend to use such moments to start hitting Spartan from behind.

Being attacked from the rear becomes annoying. Most of the time you'll have a full 360° Roman panorama to hack away at, and the unhelpful camera doesn't always display the best angles for figuring out who's next for the chop – hence our rather successful tactic of random flailing.

Before you get the wrong idea, let's make it clear that there are mission objectives – if you want endless random combat, simply head on over to the Arena mode, where you're more than welcome to chop till you drop. In the main game you'll have to protect certain individuals, sabotage various things, pull levers, climb ladders and find secret items. It's got everything an ordinary adventure game would have, except the fighting is so overwhelmingly hectic, the rest tends to get

GAY ABANDON

Look at these folks – so happy to be rescued by Spartan they're dancing a merry jig as they follow him over the bridge to safety. If you could hear them, you'd be hearing the sound of 'hey nonny-nonny' right now. Sadly, what they don't realise is that there's an army of about 500 Roman soldiers less than 100m behind. Never mind – what you can't see with the game's fiddly camera can't hurt you. Much.

YOUR MISSION

Should you choose to accept it…

SPARTAN: TOTAL WARRIOR

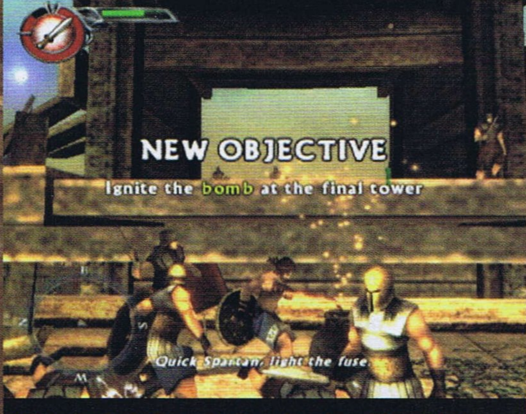
The one-man army



■ Blow up some towers with Roman archers on them.



■ Leave your pals to mop up the remains.



■ Nobody else in Sparta is allowed to play with matches.



△ No wonder she's so annoyed – everyone calls her ugly when we know quite a few people who find this look very attractive. Don't worry, love.



△ Getting in the swing of things.



△ Sweeping moves are the bestest.



△ The bloke we just wasted was called Gaius. It was a mercy killing.

overshadowed. Who cares how many bonus items were found when the only stat that really matters at the end of a level is whether or not you topped the magic 1000 kill mark?

Sometimes we ended up losing because the game decided we failed to kill a certain enemy. Unfair, because we would have got to him in due course. Those Romans may have been civilised but they had no concept of a queuing system.

There seems to be an unmentioned time limit in some areas – at least if it is, it's mentioned too quietly to register through our digital bloodlust. Whatever the cause, the action was frequently and prematurely brought to a halt.

No matter, because we didn't need asking twice on the Continue screen. *Spartan: Total Warrior's* satisfying simplicity makes it easy to lose hour after hour to repeated play-throughs of the same levels in an attempt to max out the combo meter or try wasting a boss with a different type of weapon.

"THE MOST DELICIOUSLY BLOODTHIRSTY THING WE'VE PLAYED IN SOME TIME"

BLURRY

If you can see this titchy little screenshot you'll notice it's as blurred as blurred could be. That's because the Spartan is in Rage mode, which makes him get extra personal with his Roman buddies and comes with a free blur effect to show the supernatural nature of the head-loppings that follow.

In case you're interested in technical gubbins, the Gamecube version has some special lighting effects that are better than you'll find in other console versions. Plus the game engine pushes around more soldiers than *Pikmin* manages vegetable men, and at a better framerate too.

So it's a remarkable feat of programming as well as the most deliciously bloodthirsty thing we've played in a very long time.

The closest alternative you'll find on Gamecube is the relatively obscure *Mystic Heroes*, which seemed okay at the time, but is now exposed as the weakling it really is. And when the *Total Warrior* series hits Japan, *Dynasty Warriors* can kiss its arse goodbye.

MARTIN KITTS



■ Hundreds of on-screen combatants.
■ Large environments.
■ Smooth framerate.



■ Finger-blisteringly button-mashtastic.
■ Where am I?
■ What's happening?



IF YOU LIKE THIS…

Prince Of Persia Warrior Within
Ubisoft
NGC/102, 88%
Hacking and slashing on a much smaller scale.





8 VISUALS

Incredibly busy, but a bit low-res in the texture department.

7 SOUNDS

Nice chopping noises, but something about the music doesn't fit.



8 MASTERY

More hectic than anything else, and super smooth too.



7 LIFESPAN

Arena mode should outlast the main game. Choppy-chop!

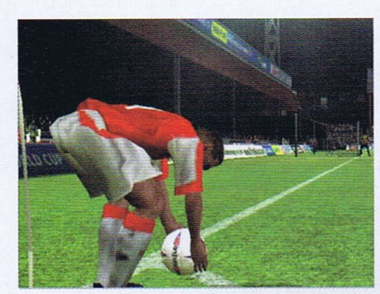
VERDICT

Looks great and leaves you physically exhausted. It's total warfare for your joypad and thumbs.

NGC

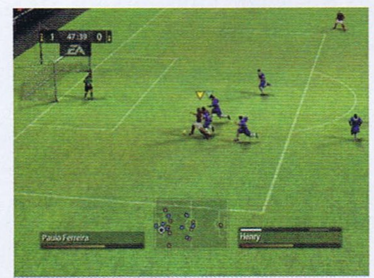


"Never of a Barry 'look at his face' Davies class"


Getting your head on a corner is one of the easiest ways to score.



All the latest kits are here and they all look amazing. Well rubbish ones like Spurs' strip don't, but you know what we mean.


Henry should be lightning, but he isn't.


The keeper has tipped that around the post. Balls.



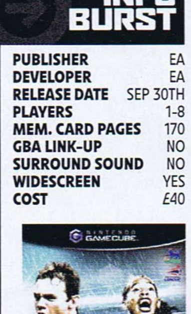
You can mess around with your player's lip thickness.

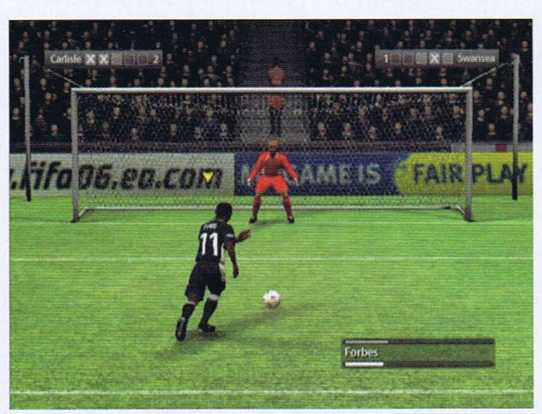


That'll be an EA Sports replay you've seen.

INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	EA
DEVELOPER	EA
RELEASE DATE	SEP 30TH
PLAYERS	1-8
MEM. CARD PAGES	170
GBA LINK-UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	NO
WIDESCREEN	YES
COST	£40



With scoring being so tricky, many of your early games will go down to the dreaded penalty shootout.

FIFA '06

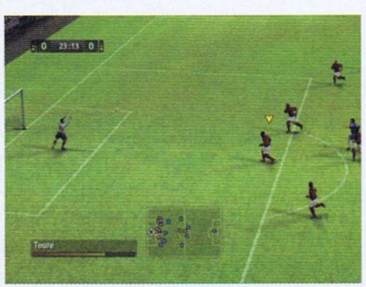
It's our faith, apparently…


You are Wayne Rooney. This is your moment', goes the opening gambit. If you actually were Wayne Rooney, upon receiving a perfect through ball, you'd expect to race clear of the defender and smash the ball into the top corner. Here, playing against Swindon Town in the FA Cup, 37-year-old clogger Alan Reeves will catch our Wayne up and 'your moment' will be gone. Unless of course 'your moment' is passing back to Paul Scholes.

This chronic lack of pace is the one thing that prevents *FIFA '06* from being a very good football game. It doesn't matter whether you're Thierry Henry, Robinho or Michael Owen, if you are running with the ball 30 yards from goal, the opposing defender will have a chance to get a tackle in.

Of course, as is always the case with *FIFA*, for the first five minutes

> **"EA REALLY KNOW HOW TO PUSH THE RIGHT FOOTBALL FAN BUTTONS"**


Henry should be lightning, but he isn't.

CHALLENGES

In addition to winning cups and leagues, there are lots of mini challenges to complete in each zone.



■ This is the Underdog challenge. Play as the Orlando Pirates (a one star team) and beat Middlesbrough (a four star team).



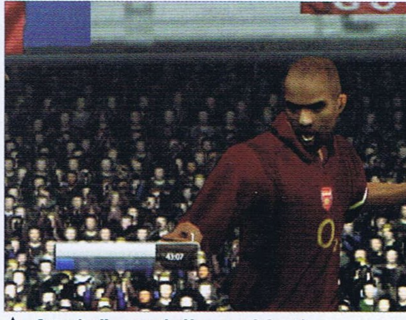
■ It's the final minute. Now all you need to do is pass the ball along your back line until the whistle blows.



■ 1–0! Win and you'll get 500 points, which can be spent on extras such as classic teams, third kits and player bios.



△ No short corners, please. Just get it in the mixer.



△ A typically moody Henry celebration.





of play you'll be convinced that this is the best football game ever (Well, you will after you've sat through the excruciating opening movie which proclaims that football is more than just a game, it's 'our faith'). First you'll hear some old commentary for a classic goal and while it's never of a Barry 'look at his face' Davies class, it is always good to hear the sound of the commentator's wonder as Rooney smashes home his first ever goal for Everton.

Then it's time to pick your team, and of course all the real player names are here, but it's the strips that really impress. From Newcastle to Norwich and Northampton, every detail is spot on – the players' names are on the back of the shirts, the sponsor is correct and any new swooshes or stripes that have been added for the new season are in there. EA really know how to push the right football fan buttons.

So it's a shame that this level of detail hasn't been applied to individual players' attributes like speed. Still, once you get over the fact that Owen is not going to race past Chesterfield's right back, you can play a decent game of football. The passing is crisp, the players' movement is smooth and there are some skill moves to learn.

The best news is that the Off The Ball feature has been ditched, so instead of having to control your striker's runs with the C-stick while also



"The George Graham school of the offside trap"



Δ Custom celebrations. Our bloke whips a wad of cash out of his shorts and waves it at the crowd, before dropping to his knees and weeping.



HEADS WINS

You won't have much luck scoring from free kicks, but it's quite simple to head the ball home from a corner. The best way is to move the arrow slightly towards goal, power up until the bar is three quarters full and then get your head on it.

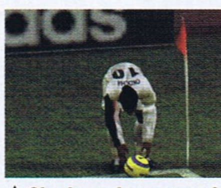








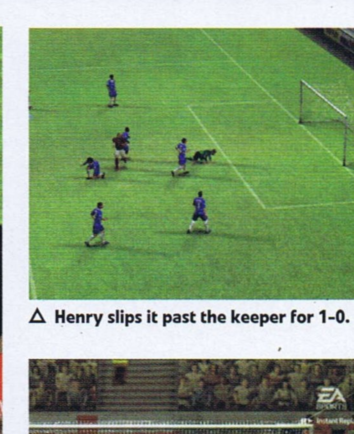




Δ Okocha – the master of hitting the crossbar



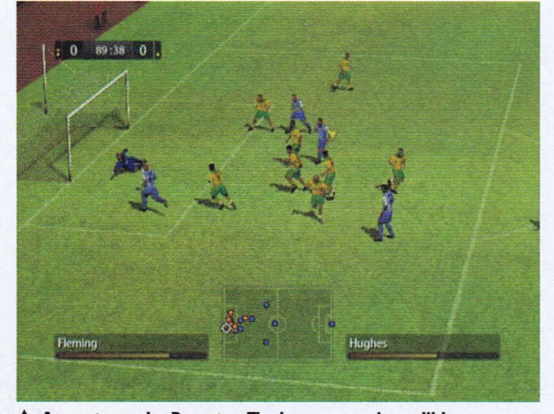
Δ Bit of an over-celebration for winning the second round of the LDV Vans trophy on penalties. Imagine the scenes if Swindon won the FA Cup. That would be difficult to imagine.



Δ Henry slips it past the keeper for 1-0.



Δ You can watch a replay at any point.



Δ A great save by Bywater. The keepers are incredible.

controlling the player on the ball, your number 9 will make his run automatically. This is good because as any linesman will testify, it is always difficult to look at two places at once.

This doesn't mean that *FIFA '06* is easy – the new ability that enables teams to call a second defender in to tackle the man on the ball means that you'll often have two men to beat when you're running down the wing. So you have to adopt an Italian-style patient approach and pass the ball across the midfield, waiting for your striker to make a run. Then if your route to goal is blocked, you'll have to knock it back.

If you spot an opportunity to play a through ball, you'll have to release it straight away as the opposition defence are drilled in the George Graham school of the offside trap. Delay a second and you'll be caught, although the linesman will blow a tantalising second late, making you believe you are through on goal with only the keeper to beat.

Still if the through balls aren't working, you can try the new chipped pass over the top or get the ball out wide. Not only is heading by far the easiest way to score in *FIFA '06*, but the crossing is the best we've seen in a football game for a long time.

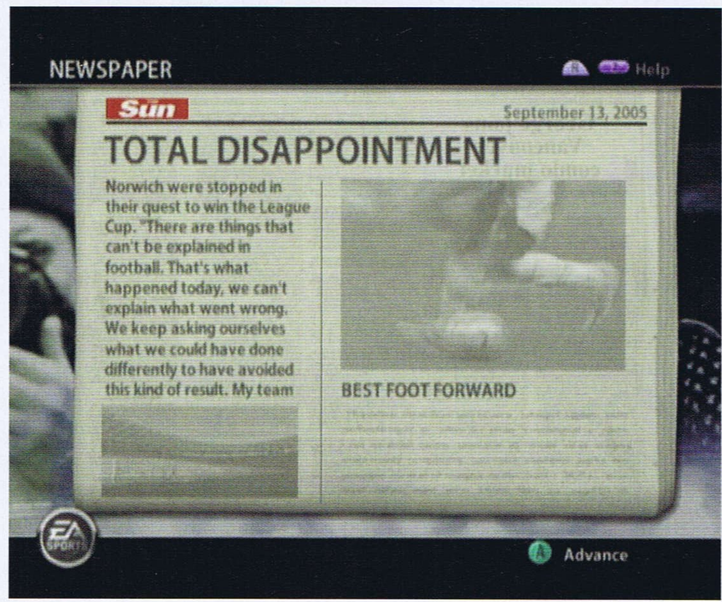
You have loads of control as you can use the power bar to send a deep cross straight over the keeper's head or play an early, low cross to the near post. Or you can



FREE KICK

This is a neat touch. When you get a free kick, you can call another player over to stand by the ball. Then, when you take the free kick, he will roll it to you for you to hit. Not that it makes much difference – the keeper will probably save your effort anyway. The power bar rises very quickly as well, so you'll often blaze it over the crossbar. You can, of course, practise your free kicks on the training ground.

YOU'RE THE BOSS
Picking the team is the easy bit.



Total Disappointment. Headlines that any Norwich manager is used to seeing, but it's a bit harsh considering that they lost one game in the League Cup against a Premiership side. But then that's the football press for you. Always booting your arse when you're down.



You'll earn credits after every match which you can use to spend on new players.


But you'll only earn big credits if you win matches and get large gate receipts.



△ A replay of the Arsenal offside trap – or maybe they're celebrating.



△ The animation when the players' shoot is pretty accurate.

even play a square through ball for your striker to tap in. Brilliant.

The reason heading the ball is the easiest way to score is that unless you're one-on-one with the keeper, shooting is quite tricky. Directing the ball is easy, but like the centre backs, every keeper is outstanding. So most of your top corner-bound free kicks or long-range volleys will be clawed away.

Still, when you do head home to go one goal up, you can exploit a bit of cheaty AI to win the game 1-0 every time. We now know that *FIFA* is a patient game of short, square passes, but here you can pass the ball along your back line without being challenged. So if you're a goal ahead you can just pass the ball from defender to defender and the opposing strikers won't close you down straight away and try to get it off you.

Sure it's boring and not exactly in the spirit of the game, but if you're in a situation where you have to win one match to achieve promotion to the Premiership, who wouldn't play a bit dirty? Along with the slow strikers, it's another thing that prevents *FIFA '06* from becoming what it could be.

The football itself is very good and with the amount of challenges on offer you could be busy playing until the end of the current season without getting bored. And by that time there will be a World Cup and probably another game to worry about.

Whatever happens, the basics of a really good game are here. Just sort out that silly flaw and the players' speed and we'll have a cracking football game. But after more than 15 years of *FIFA* games, we shouldn't have to be saying this sort of thing.

TOM EAST

PASS AND MOVE
Bolton-style long ball football won't work, so it's a good job you can string together some quality passing moves. In addition to the through balls and chipped passes, you can also play some one-twos, which are very useful if you want to get a head start on the defenders. You can also do a dummy where you pretend to pass, but just carry on running with the ball.

> **"MOST OF YOUR TOP CORNER BOUND FREE KICKS WILL BE CLAWED AWAY"**


- The strips are incredibly detailed.
- The passing is very good.


- It's hard to score from distance.
- Even players like Henry are slow.


IF YOU LIKE THIS...

Winning Eleven FE
Nintendo
NGC/79 93%
You'll have to import it, but this is the best football game around. Worth the effort.



9 VISUALS
As always, the presentation is impeccable.

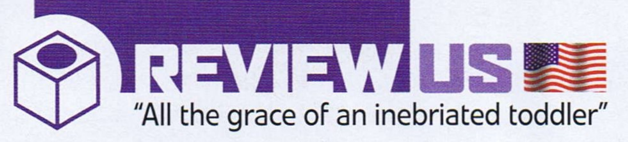
8 SOUNDS
The commentary can be irritating, but the music is fantastic.


6 MASTERY
The AI is a bit dodgy at times, but it moves smoothly.

9 LIFESPAN
Unbelievably tricky challenges set across 12 zones.

VERDICT
If the players' had some personality to go with their good looks, this could have been the best *FIFA* yet.


NGC 70



"All the grace of an inebriated toddler"

△ This is actually a port of the PC version of *Sonic R*. It's nice and smooth, but handles like a pig.

SONIC GEMS COLLECTION

You'd have more fun with a saucer of milk and a shotgun…

△ *Sonic Triple Trouble* is one of the better Game Gear titles, but that's not saying much.



△ Look at it! Just LOOK AT IT! For crying out loud, people will pay good money for this.

INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	SEGA
DEVELOPER	SEGA
RELEASE DATE	OUT NOW
PLAYERS	1-4
MEM. CARD PAGES	37
GBA LINK-UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	NO
WIDESCREEN	NO
COST	£20

To say that Sega are scraping the bottom of the barrel is something of an understatement. There are three main 'gems' on the disk – *Sonic CD, Sonic: The Fighters* and *Sonic R* – none of which were anywhere near as popular as the original *Sonic* trilogy, mainly because they appeared on systems that never sold particularly well.

The pick of the bunch has to be *Sonic CD*, a game many claim to be the best 2D Sonic platformer ever made, and something that we can remember enjoying a great deal. It doesn't bode well then, that even this hasn't aged very well. Yes, it's certainly quite pretty in places, and the ability to leap between the past and future in the same level was quite clever back in 1993, but in this day and age it all seems very fussy and convoluted.

> **"THE ONLY PEOPLE WE COULD POSSIBLY RECOMMEND THIS TO ARE COLLECTORS"**

To be perfectly honest, some of the level design is also a bit of a mess, feeling unnecessarily slap-dash, unfocused and as it lacks the streamlined purity of the earlier *Sonic* games, it can often feel like too much of an effort to play. That's not to say it's a poor game, mind – it's still a very solid and enjoyable platformer, it's just not as good as we remember it being, and we're not quite as forgiving as we were back then.

In fact, the only thing that has stood the test of time is the excellent music, which is hardly a reason to buy *Sonic Gems Collection* in itself, and will probably only be interesting for the people who played the game the first time around.

SONIC GEMS COLLECTION

Sonic gloom



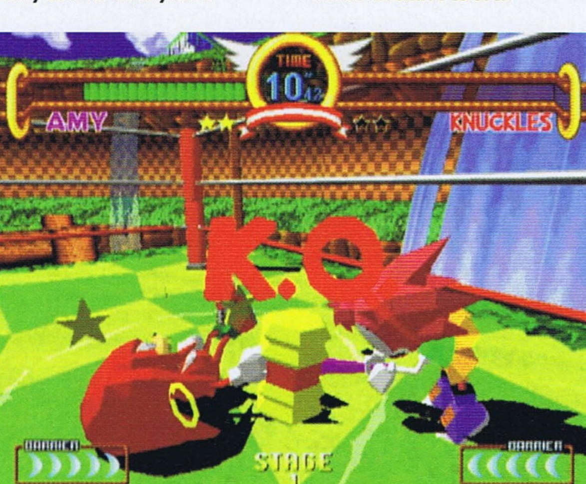
△ ***Sonic CD*'s levels seem a bit too long winded for our tastes now – the only thing that's as good as we remember is the music.**



△ **Shiny mirrored surfaces don't really do it for us anymore.**



△ **The Robotnik encounters are still as inventive as ever.**





△ ***Sonic R* and *Sonic: The Fighters* are the undoubtedly the prettiest games in the collection, but they're not really much fun.**



△ **Thank God they never had the technology to make him speak.**



△ ***Tails Adventures*: a duller, slower paced platformer.**



△ **Here's hoping that the forthcoming *Sonic Riders* can do the idea justice, eh?**



△ **Working from the *Virtua Fighter* engine, *Sonic: The Fighters* feels sluggish and unwieldy.**



△ **Good old Robotnik. His *Mean Bean Machine* is better than any of this rubbish.**



- *Sonic CD* is still worth a punt.
- There's a lot of Sonic love in here.



- Why can't we have *Streets of Rage*?
- 90% of the games are rubbish.



IF YOU LIKE THIS...

Sonic Mega Collection
Sega
NGC/79, 70%
The superior Mega Drive games, along with some great extra content.



5 VISUALS

A mixed bag thanks to the original hardware.



5 SOUNDS

Game Gear noises through your TV anyone?

2 MASTERY

You're kidding, right?



6 LIFESPAN

Depends on your tolerance of old, third rate software.

VERDICT

Sadly, this is a curiosity and nothing more. *Sonic CD* isn't bad, but the others make us feel, well, uneasy...



Which leaves us with the rest of the disc to consider, and we're sad to say it goes downhill rapidly. Both *Sonic R* and *Sonic: The Fighters* both look reasonable enough, and the clunky 3D engines powering them both lend a certain charm, but actually playing them is another matter. *Sonic R*, the *Mario Kart*-style racer of the pack, while reasonably speedy, is an absolute pig to control, with each racer skating around the circuits with all the grace of an inebriated toddler.

Fighters isn't too hot either, shoe horning Sonic characters into the frankly decrepit *Virtua Fighter* engine. It's painfully slow and unresponsive, and while there's plenty to master in terms of move sets and combos, we can't imagine anyone wanting to put in the effort when the fighting genre has been refined significantly over the last decade.

The final nail in the coffin has to be the collection of awful Game Gear games, which were pretty terrible the first time around. The only ones worth more than five minutes of your time are the mildly interesting *Skypatrol* – which, despite being unique in its aerial puzzling action, is still a frustrating chore of a game – and the reasonably competent, but no less tedious, *Triple Trouble*.

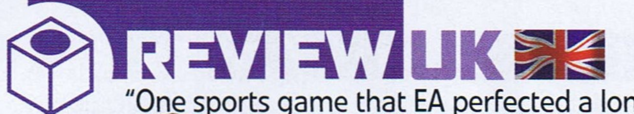
The only thing that could have saved *Sonic Gems Collection* is the extra content, and it fails in this respect too. The fact that the only unlockable extras are the *Vectorman* games is scant consolation considering the Japanese version includes *Streets of Rage* and its sequels – three games that would definitely have made this compilation worth considering.

So there you have it, completely underwhelming all round. If you have to buy a *Sonic Collection*, then the previous one is far superior. To start with, the games on that disc are actually pretty decent and, as an added bonus, extras like *Flicky* and *Ristar* really round the package off. The only people we could possibly recommend this to are collectors.

GERAINT EVANS

GAME QUEER

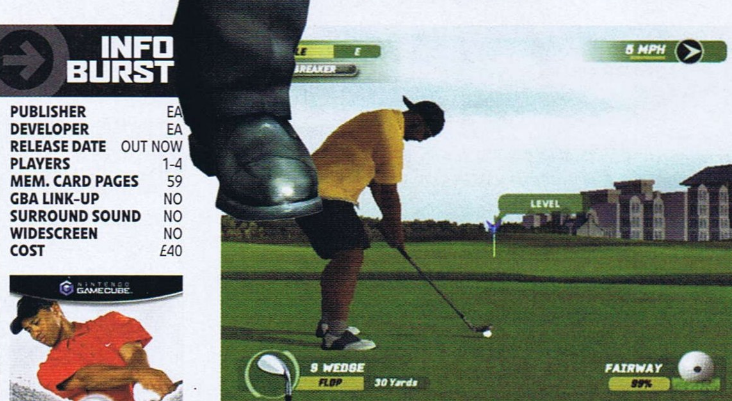
The Game Gear titles on here are horrendous. We challenge anyone who isn't a sickening retro pervert to play them for longer than five minutes before turning them off in disgust. Why anyone would want to play these is beyond us.



△ The new putting system for *Tiger Woods 2006* allows you to read the greens for yourself.

TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2006

EA start to meddle with Tiger's swing but will anybody really notice?



INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	EA
DEVELOPER	EA
RELEASE DATE	OUT NOW
PLAYERS	1-4
MEM. CARD PAGES	59
GBA LINK-UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	NO
WIDESCREEN	NO
COST	£40

△ If you want an effective short game, work on your flop.



When you hit the perfect golf shot, when the hips, wrists and shoulders combine together to whip the ball down the fairway, when the club hits the ball and makes the sound of a tuning fork resonating in your soul, you want to be able to freeze that moment, then Xerox that once in a lifetime swing and use it again for every single shot. It's a time when a golfer's momentum, focus and attitude have come together perfectly, and it simply has to be preserved.

Once you've mastered that perfect swing, the last thing you should do is start tinkering with it as a swing that works is a delicate thing. Just a different positoning of the head, a fractionally different hip twist or shuffle can drastically effect the end product. It's usually best to just leave it be and enjoy.

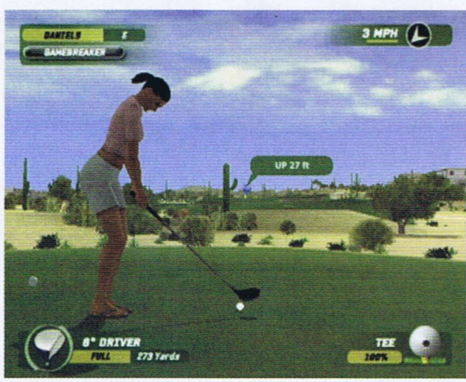
Which brings us to *Tiger Woods 2006*. EA have created something that's acclaimed as the best golf game on any console – a game that treads the line between arcade fun and simulator toughness superbly. But then they started tinkering with the already very sucessful formula, trying to fix what wasn't broken in the first place. First came the Tiger Vision, then Tiger Proofing (you knew we were just a step away from Tiger Feet), but for *Tiger Woods 2006*, they've gone and tweaked the swing. And as we've pointed out above, this could be potentially fatal.



△ A return to St Andrews is a must. Dead tough course though.

TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2006

Move those Tiger feet



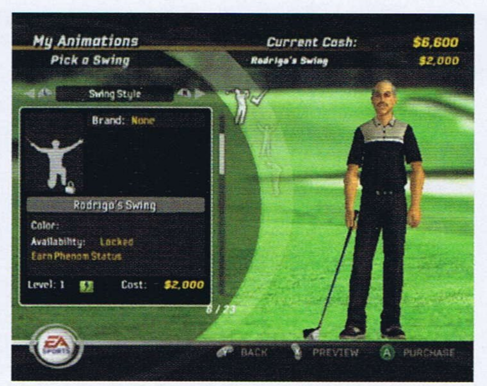
△ The unlockable characters range from daft to pretty.



△ Woods in full flow.



△ There's now a Gamebreaker in Tiger.



△ You can even customise your swing.



- Still the best golf game around.
- Huge amount of customisable options.



- Not really an essential update.
- The Rivals mode is pretty gimmicky.



IF YOU LIKE THIS...

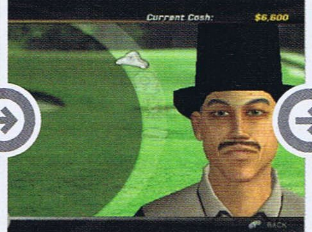
Mario Golf
Nintendo
NGC/95 85%
Almost as competent as the *Tiger Woods* games, but with friendlier faces.

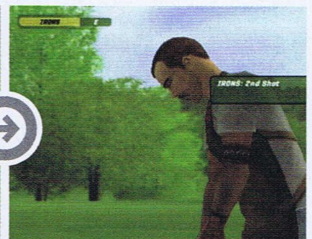


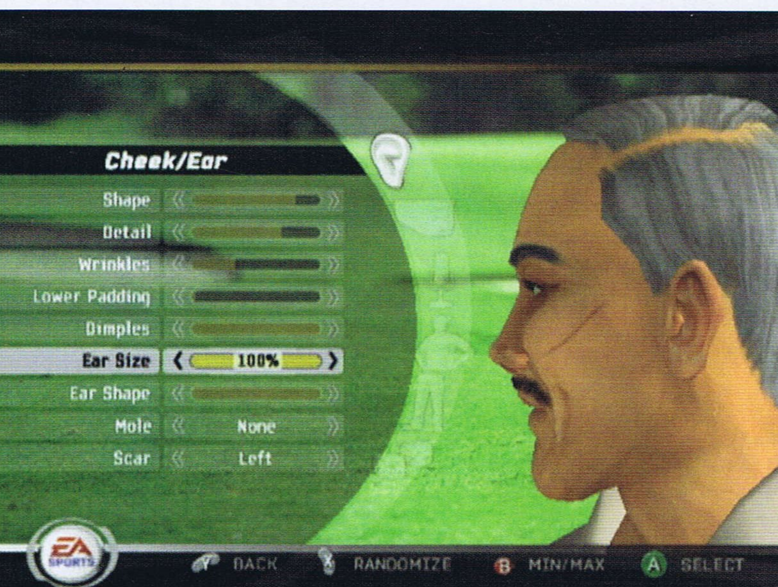
SWING TIME

The Rivals mode sees your golfer following Tiger Woods through time, taking on challenges from golfers in each period. It also gives you the opportunity to play against all time legends at the peak of their powers.





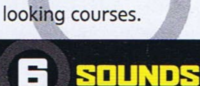




△ The detail you can go into making your golfer's face is incredible. Scary even.







8 VISUALS

Great animation and some beautiful looking courses.



6 SOUNDS

The commentators' comments can get a little snide.



9 MASTERY

A very good golf game – as it always has been.

10 LIFESPAN

Tons of game options and almost infinite replay value.

VERDICT

Tiger's undeniable quality has survived the tweaks. As impressive as ever but no great leap forward in evolution.

NGC 81

You still swing by pushing back and forwards on the analogue stick, but now the ball spin and the fade or draw is controlled by the C-stick, so you have to be coordinated enough to tweak two analogue sticks at the same time – even for the advanced player it's all a bit too fiddly and is a real challenge if you want to do it accurately. Irritatingly, it feels like its been bolted on and it's all a bit unnecessary as you can still get around the course under par without using fade or draw.

The other significant change is that the putting is now controlled by the analogue stick, so you judge the speed of the shot as you would do any shot on the fairway. Once again, this is tricky if you want to do it accurately, but you do get used to it after a while.

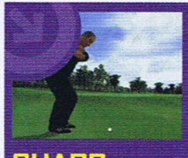
Although the two tweaks haven't improved anything, they're not ruinous. Unless you really want to get world record low scores, you can ignore the C-stick and play a very good game of golf. *Woods '06* still plays as well as ever, it has still got the top courses (including seven new ones), the best golfers, and loads of modifying options.

So if you don't already have a golf game in your collection, this is still the best one out there. But for those of you that have an old *Tiger Woods* game that you just bring out for a bit of multiplayer fun, it's best to ignore it, as aside from the swing tinkering there's not enough here to warrant another 40 notes.

See, this is one sports game that EA perfected a long time ago. Its been going for many years and has been consistently very good. It has to be admired for its precision and presentation, but it no longer has to be celebrated.

DAVE HARRISON

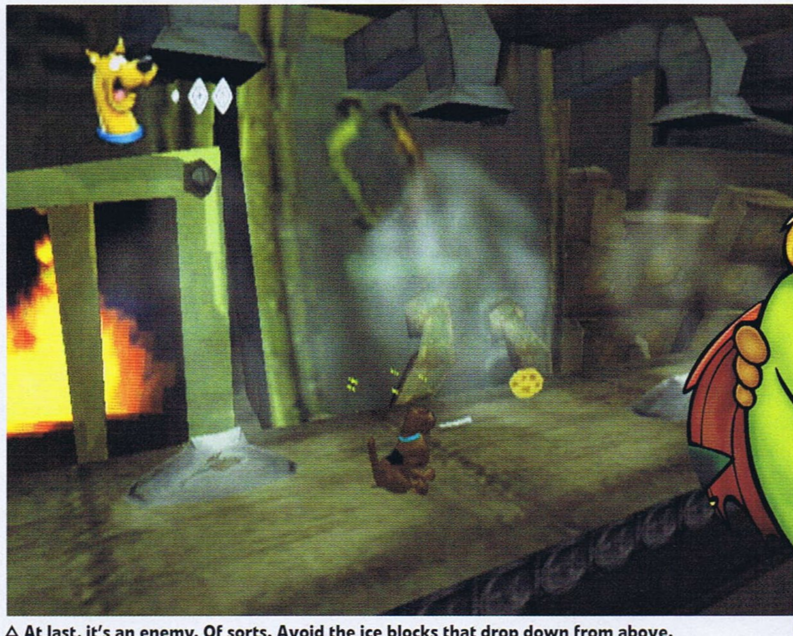
"IF YOU DON'T ALREADY HAVE A GOLF GAME THIS IS STILL THE BEST ONE OUT THERE"

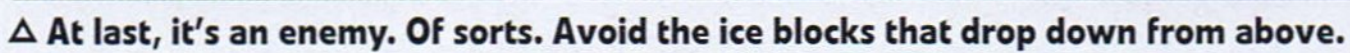


SHARP DRESSED MAN

Here's a welcome tweak – you can now develop your skills and wardrobe seperately. You now get experience points to spend on performance upgrades, leaving you to splash all your cash on the latest threads. Which there are an awful lot of...

"None of the personality of the cartoons"





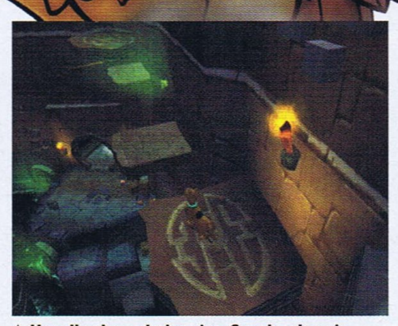
At last, it's an enemy. Of sorts. Avoid the ice blocks that drop down from above.



Annoyingly as soon as you enter a new level, you'll lose this unlocked suit…



… so you have to collect more Mubber to unlock the Kung Fu suit again.



Usually the only leaping Scooby does is when he jumps into Shaggy's arms.

SCOOBY DOO UNMASKED

Not quite as loveable as a Nintendog…

Yes, Scooby and his friends have another mystery to solve. This time, Fred takes them to see their cousin Jed at his special effects factory, only to find that he has disappeared and his animatronics have gone mental. The owner suspects Jed trashed the place to get hold of a material called Mubber, so the gang have to use their sleuthing skills to find out what's going on. And how will you solve this mystery? By collecting light bulbs. Of course.

See, *Scooby Doo Unmasked* has absolutely none of the personality of the cartoons. Playing as Scooby, all you do is run around the factory collecting Scooby snacks, leaping over platforms and collecting clues to give to Velma. Solving mysteries sounds like fun, and it would be if you actually had to work with Velma to complete puzzles, but all you do is jump into the light bulbs (or clues) that are floating in the air. Then you take the clue to Velma and listen to her bang on about some nonsense. Skip.

"IT SEEMS LIKE SCOOBY HAS BEEN DUMPED ON THE SET OF CRASH BANDICOOT"

It seems like Scooby has been dumped on the set of *Crash Bandicoot*. Yet even in *Crash*, as annoying as it is, at least there are loads of (badly designed) enemies to spin to death, but here it's mostly just dull platforming as you bounce on trampolines, leap on moving pillars and slide down tunnels. After a while, you'll come across some rats or stray animatronics, but you can take them out with a tail whip.

As Game Boy Color's *Scooby Doo: Classic Creep Capers* proved, it is possible to make a proper puzzle-solving mystery that really captures the essence of Scooby Doo and if you can do that on a tiny cartridge, why the hell isn't it possible on Gamecube?

TOM EAST

INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	THQ
DEVELOPER	A2M
RELEASE DATE	OUT NOW
PLAYERS	1
MEM. CARD PAGES	1
GBA LINK-UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	NO
WIDESCREEN	NO
COST	£30





- Scooby does look quite nice.
- The Kung Fu suit is pretty cool.



- It's had a complete humour bypass.
- Distinct lack of any real action.



IF YOU LIKE THIS...

Rayman 3 Hoodlum Havoc
Ubisoft
NGC/78, 84%
Hardly revolutionary, but it's a better platformer than Scooby.





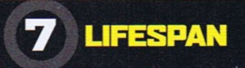
6 VISUALS

Scooby looks good, but the levels are a bit grey and muddy.



7 SOUNDS

Decent Scooby and Shaggy vocals. Dull incidental music.



5 MASTERY

Moves smoothly, but it's uninspiring platforming action.

7 LIFESPAN

The game's three worlds are actually quite big.

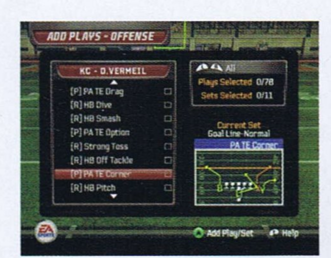
VERDICT

A dull, lifeless platformer that's bettered by the likes of *Crash Bandicoot* and *Rayman*. The shame.

NGC

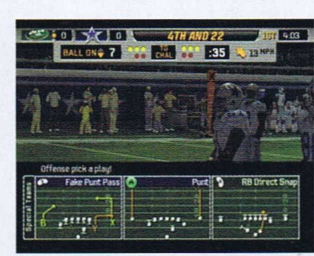


"Fun, but ultimately disposable"

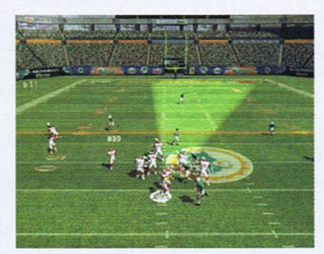

△ Create your own playbooks here.


△ In terms of depth and presentation, there are few better.


△ Ooof! The QB gets it big style.


△ The set-up will feel familiar if you have spent any time with *Madden*.


△ Received! And a hang time of 2.8.


△ Here's your QB vision. Not quite the innovation it seems on paper.

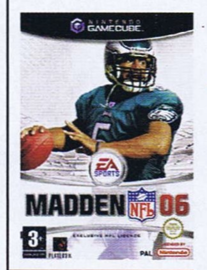

△ Whammo! There goes the kick. The orange line tracks the movement of your receiver for you. Handy.

MADDEN NFL 2006

Like last year's version. Literally.

INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	EA
DEVELOPER	TIBURON
RELEASE DATE	OUT NOW
PLAYERS	1-4
MEM. CARD PAGES	32
GBA LINK-UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	YES
WIDESCREEN	YES
COST	£40



For the three of you who have been paying close attention to the *Madden* series over the past few years, it'll come as a shock to learn that this year's version isn't anything special. No, that's unfair. It's still very good, but it simply isn't different enough from the previous instalments in the series and not enough steps have been taken to improve the game.

Although there have been a few tweaks to the Franchise mode, like improved Gameplan options and a Spawn mode, which allows you to replicate successful, unplanned plays during the season. This is a great feature as it adds a feeling of spontaneity that Madden sometimes lacks with all its pre-set tactics.

Then there's the new Superstar mode, which kind of bolts on to the Franchise mode and gives you the chance to experience the lifestyle of an NFL superstar, with all the contracts, appearances and ladies that go with it. It's fun, but ultimately disposable.

> "AN IMPRESSIVE STAND-ALONE GAME, BUT THE MOST DISAPPOINTING IN THE SERIES"

After that it becomes a bit of a struggle. There's the brand new QB mode, which gives your quarterback a cone of vision before he plays a pass, but unfortunately it's hard to see the benefit of this. Your receivers have huge button icons over them anyway and operating the mode is a pain in the arse. The fact you're given the option to switch if off pretty much speaks for itself.

Unfortunately, after this, updates are very thin on the ground. There's no new motion capture, the visuals haven't been improved, nothing. All this leaves *Madden 2006* as an impressive stand-alone sports game, but the most disappointing in the series for years.

TIM WEAVER



- The Franchise mode is huge.
- The Superstar option is fun.

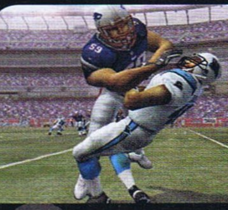


- No new animations.
- Needless QB mode.
- Few improvements over last year's.



IF YOU LIKE THIS...

Madden 2005
EA
NGC/99, 87%
No Superstar mode and the players aren't up to date, but it's as good as this.



8 VISUALS



Smooth, beautifully animated, but no improvement on '05.

8 SOUNDS



Great – plus there's a great radio show in Franchise mode.

8 MASTERY

A great sports game brilliantly done on a great games console.

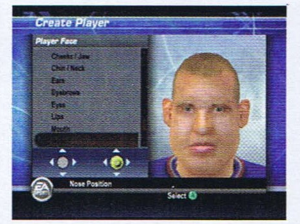
7 LIFESPAN

Huge and involving, but if you've got *Madden 2005*…

VERDICT

It's still a magnificent game, but the great strides of the last few seasons have stalled for '06.






△ Create an incred-o-freak like this and then play him in-game. Beaut.





△ As always, there's a shedload of customisable play options to look at.

△ You can tame down the fights or beef them up if you want.



△ Ah, classic cam. This is the best view for making the most of NHL.



△ Cutaways like this help set up the scene.



△ In-goal targets should make scoring easier.



△ The usual slickness greets you from the off.

INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	EA
DEVELOPER	EA CANADA
RELEASE DATE	OUT NOW
PLAYERS	1-4
MEM. CARD PAGES	14
GBA LINK-UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	YES
WIDESCREEN	YES
COST	£40



NHL 2006

Back to the start. And all the better for it.

As Barry Davies once said: "Interesting… *Very* interesting." After years of moving further and further away from the *NHL* series' memorable roots on the Mega Drive (we're all Nintendo fans of course, but you have to admit that *NHL* was bloody good on Sega's console), *NHL 2006* returns to its arcade origins, and to be honest it's infinitely better for it.

We're not sure how version 2006 will go down with North America's hardcore hockey fans, but for us, the switch from ultra-realism to classic arcade action is very successful. It's faster, slicker, easier, accessible and funner. And that's not even a word.

Part of the attraction are the deeks (or dummies to you and me) you can now sell to opposition defenders, completely flipping the balance in favour of offense. Of course you can still lay down defensive plans if you want, but the game makes it a lot easier to swarm forward, glide past players and smash the puck into the back of the net.

> **"THE SWITCH FROM ULTRA-REALISM TO ARCADE ACTION IS VERY SUCCESSFUL"**

For more seasoned puck fans, there's still the awesome Dynasty Mode, a huge variety of plays and enough tactics to fill a hundred chalkboards, but there's little doubt that EA's aim for 2006 was to up the ante in terms of entertainment. Trick shots and showboating are now super-easy to use, while there's an in-net bullseye showing you exactly where you're aiming as you attack.

Has it lost something? Well, not really. Previous years' hard work hasn't actually been undone, just added to and approached differently. The result is an end-to-end, attack-minded hockey sim that evokes wonderful memories of The Old Days.

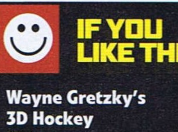
TIM WEAVER

+

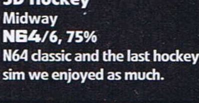
- Faster and more exciting.
- Deeks, tricks and showboating.

–

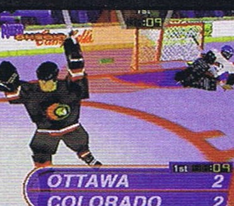
- The PS2 version comes with NHL '94 – why doesn't the Gamecube one?



IF YOU LIKE THIS...



Wayne Gretzky's 3D Hockey
Midway
N64/6, 75%
N64 classic and the last hockey sim we enjoyed as much.





8 VISUALS

Small changes, including realistic skate/ice carving.



8 SOUNDS

Typical EA mastery of commentary, sounds and atmosphere.



8 MASTERY

A simpler approach, but a better use of Gamecube's pad.



8 LIFESPAN

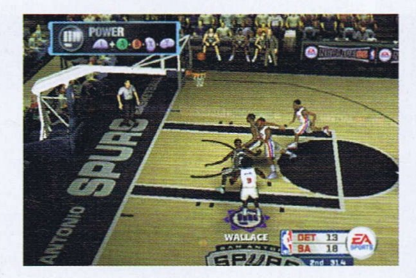
Deep, but now with an accessible surface sheen. Nice.

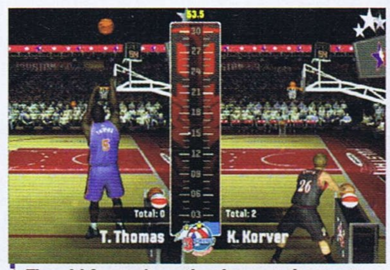
VERDICT

Cracking arcade-style hockey that returns the series to its finest hour on the Mega Drive. You'll love it.

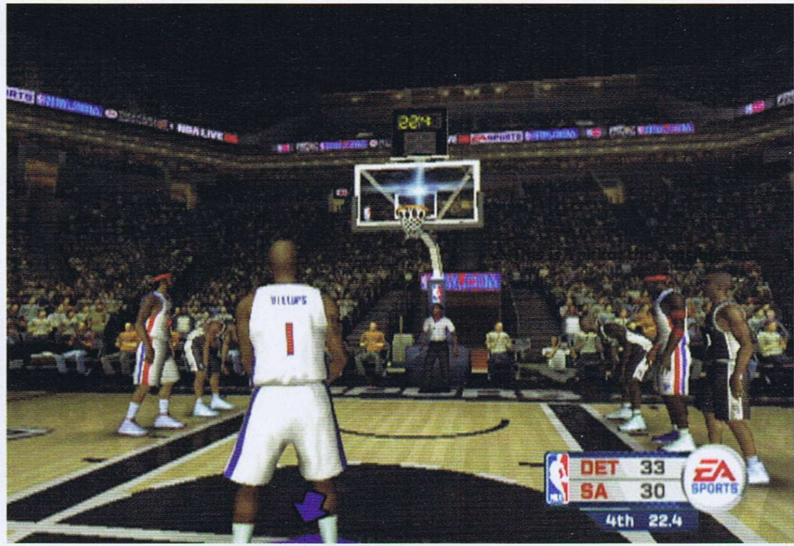


NGC 88

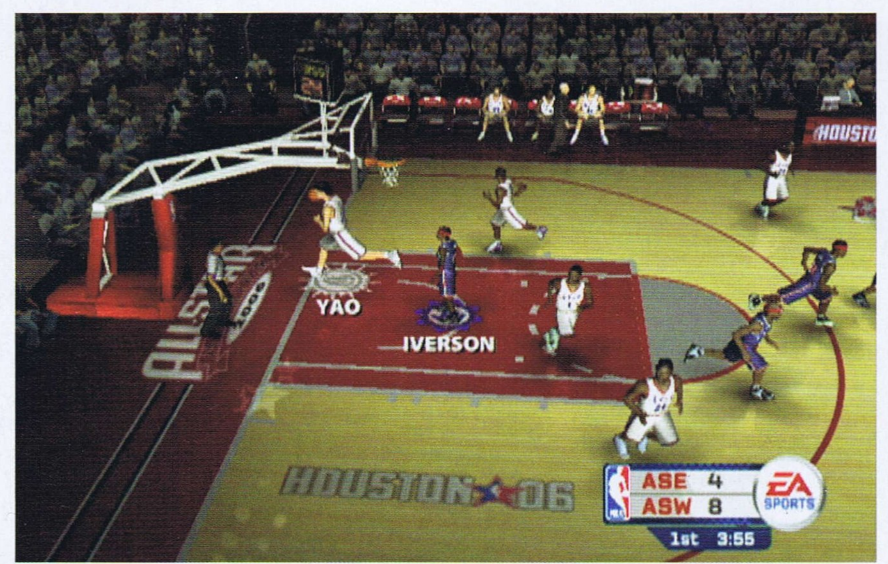




△ The old favourite – the three pt shootout.



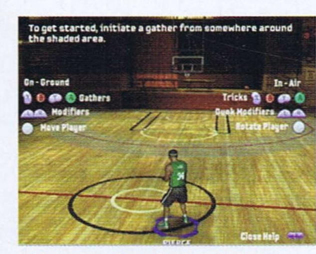
△ Shooting a free shot is easy – just stop the moving blue lines on the backboard in the middle.



△ At least, unlike real life NBA, you won't have to stop for a break after every couple of minutes.



△ You can play a one-on-one game.



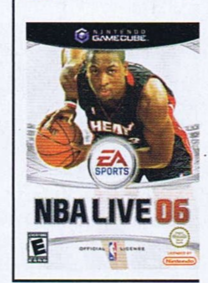
△ Do some slam dunk training – believe us, you'll need it.

NBA LIVE '06

EA's basketball sim takes a turn for the worse.



INFO BURST	
PUBLISHER	EA
DEVELOPER	EA
RELEASE DATE	OUT NOW
PLAYERS	1-4
MEM. CARD PAGES	131
GBA LINK-UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	NO
WIDESCREEN	YES
COST	£40





Many people complain that basketball is ridiculously high scoring – one team runs up one end and scores before the other legs it to the other basket and does exactly the same. But anyone who has actually been to a live match knows that this isn't true. Top players will flunk dunks and the tension comes from seeing whether those missed opportunities will be punished.

NBA Live '06 almost succeeds in replicating this tension. Unlike last year's effort, scoring baskets is no longer easy. This time, if you let go of a shoot a fraction too late you'll miss – and don't even bother trying a combo for a spectacular slam dunk, it's so risky it's barely worth the effort.

If that's not tough enough, when you're playing against a decent team like the Detroit Pistons, not only will they often steal possession, but they'll rush up the other end and score easily. So every time you pass forward and are setting up to shoot, you'll feel the tension, knowing that a miss could prove costly.

This sounds like the realistic basketball sim we've been waiting for, but surprisingly it's let down by a dodgy framerate. An NBA game has to be fast and fluid, but this is jerky and the animation is so poor it's difficult to judge when to let go of the ball when shooting, and simple tasks like picking up a loose ball become tricky.

It's such a shame, because with a smooth framerate this could have been the best basketball game since *NBA Courtside 2002*.

TOM EAST

> "EVERY TIME YOU ARE SETTING UP TO SHOOT, YOU'LL FEEL THE TENSION"



- Very realistic.
- Loads of modes.
- The management mode is huge.



- Absolutely terrible framerate.
- Poor animation.
- A bit slow.



IF YOU LIKE THIS...

NBA Courtside 2002
Nintendo
NGC/68, 79%
If you want realistic basketball action, there's none better.





6 VISUALS
Falls short compared with other EA sports games like *FIFA*.



6 SOUNDS
Basketball isn't exactly renowned for its atmosphere.

5 MASTERY
The dodgy framerate spoils the whole experience.



8 LIFESPAN
The Dynasty mode will keep you going for weeks.

VERDICT
It is the most realistic basketball game we've played for ages, but realism doesn't make up for the jerky action.



NGC 55




△ Go on Kitty, kick some arse. She's incredibly violent for a kitten.





△ Pow. It's just like *XIII*, only with a magic wand instead of guns.



△ Annihilate all the enemies and you'll rescue one of Hello's friends.



△ Five dollars for a slice of cake? It's as bad as Mark's and Spencers.




△ You rescued Kitty's mum. It's enough to make you cry. Or is that us?




△ Complete a level and Kitty will do a little dance on her skates.

INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	NAMCO
DEVELOPER	XPLOSIVE
RELEASE DATE	OUT NOW
PLAYERS	1
MEM. CARD PAGES	4
GBA LINK-UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	NO
WIDESCREEN	NO
COST	£20



HELLO KITTY ROLLER RESCUE

As Kylie sings, she's doing it for the kids.

We were in a painfully long queue at Waitrose the other day when we saw this kid running around his dad's back. When he disappeared from view, the dad would say, "Where's he gone?" Cue shrieks of laughter. It got a bit annoying after the 37th time, but the point is that kids are easily pleased.

It's a good job too, because apart from a few extremely kooky indie kids, *Hello Kitty: Roller Rescue* really won't please anyone over the age of seven – there isn't much to it other than skating around town saving friends and taking out enemies with your magic wand. Kitty does have some basic combos, and once she's killed enough bad people she'll fill up her magic meter, which enables her to pull off a special move. We never realised Hello Kitty was so violent.

Obviously it's all really simple as you're told what to do and where to go on every single level. The only time we got stuck is when we couldn't be bothered to read the instructions when taking on the first boss. But that's not a problem – all that really matters with kids' games like this is if they're well made or not, and this is where *Hello Kitty: Roller Rescue* wins.

> **"THIS SHOULD KEEP A FIVE YEAR OLD HAPPY FOR A WEEKEND AT LEAST"**

For starters, it's got a lovely 3D cartoon look – Kitty looks good, the towns are bright and colourful and there are some nice cartoon pows when you leap in the air and let loose a volley of fire from your magic wand. It captures Kitty's personality perfectly and you can't really ask for any more than that.

With plenty of clothing to unlock and dress up in, this should keep a five year old happy for a weekend at least.

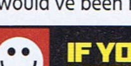
TOM EAST



- Bright and colourful toon visuals.
- It's quite charming. Wand violence, aside.



- Not worth playing if you're over 7.
- Some mini-games would've been nice.



IF YOU LIKE THIS...

Ty the Tasmanian Tiger
EA
NGC/76, 60%
Hardly ground-breaking, but it's solid and bright enough to entertain younger gamers.





8 VISUALS
From the opening cutscene onwards it really looks lovely.



6 SOUNDS
Nice crunching thwacks when Kitty takes out enemies.



6 MASTERY
Obviously it doesn't push the boundaries. Okay, though.

3 LIFESPAN
It's all fairly simple stuff, but then it's meant to be.

VERDICT

We can't remember seeing Kitty kill anyone, but other than that, she's been represented well in this kids game.

NGC





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Don't shrinky-dink me!







MARIO KART

Ready, steady, let's-a go! Read the first review of the biggest DS game yet. It'll be peachy!

PLUS!

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HELLO AND Goodbye

Nintendo's unique, idiotic and downright weird game concepts now lying in history's rubbish bin.

Going wild on one wheel
UNIRACERS
SUPER NINTENDO (1994)

See what happens when you rescue unicycles from the tyranny of street performers? Free the unicycles! *Uniracers* was so fast it could out-race a ballistic missile, with mono-wheeled racers (sans riders) flipping, spinning and rolling around tracks designed by someone probably sacked from a rollercoaster factory for being 'too twisty'. It's all been a bit quiet on the unicycle racing front since. So what quirky little game is the developer making now? Er, *Grand Theft Auto*.

LASTING INFLUENCE: Inspiring *Iggy's Reckin Balls* – 56% in NGC/19. Well done that game.



Bear-faced morality playing
WALLY BEAR AND THE NO! GANG
NES (1990)

In the '90s, videogames and TV shows were often used to keep kids away from bad gangs and their bad ways – coin-ops of the time even started up with a warning from the chairman of the FBI. But *Wally Bear* was about as subtle a message as writing 'No To Narcotics!' across the whole of Antarctica using a heat-laser from space – and kids were left wondering why such a defiant and kind-hearted bear was subjected to vicious, unprovoked attacks by neighbourhood dogs and birds.

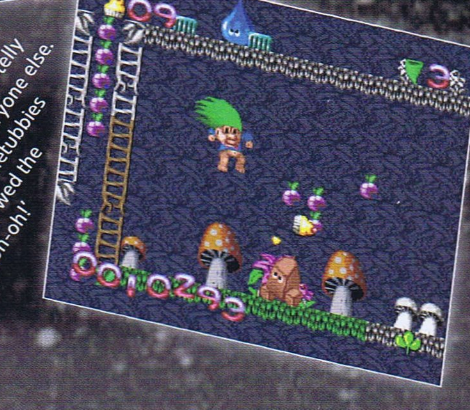
LASTING INFLUENCE: *Pikmin 2* was a sharp lesson in the dangers of gorging on white Pikmin.

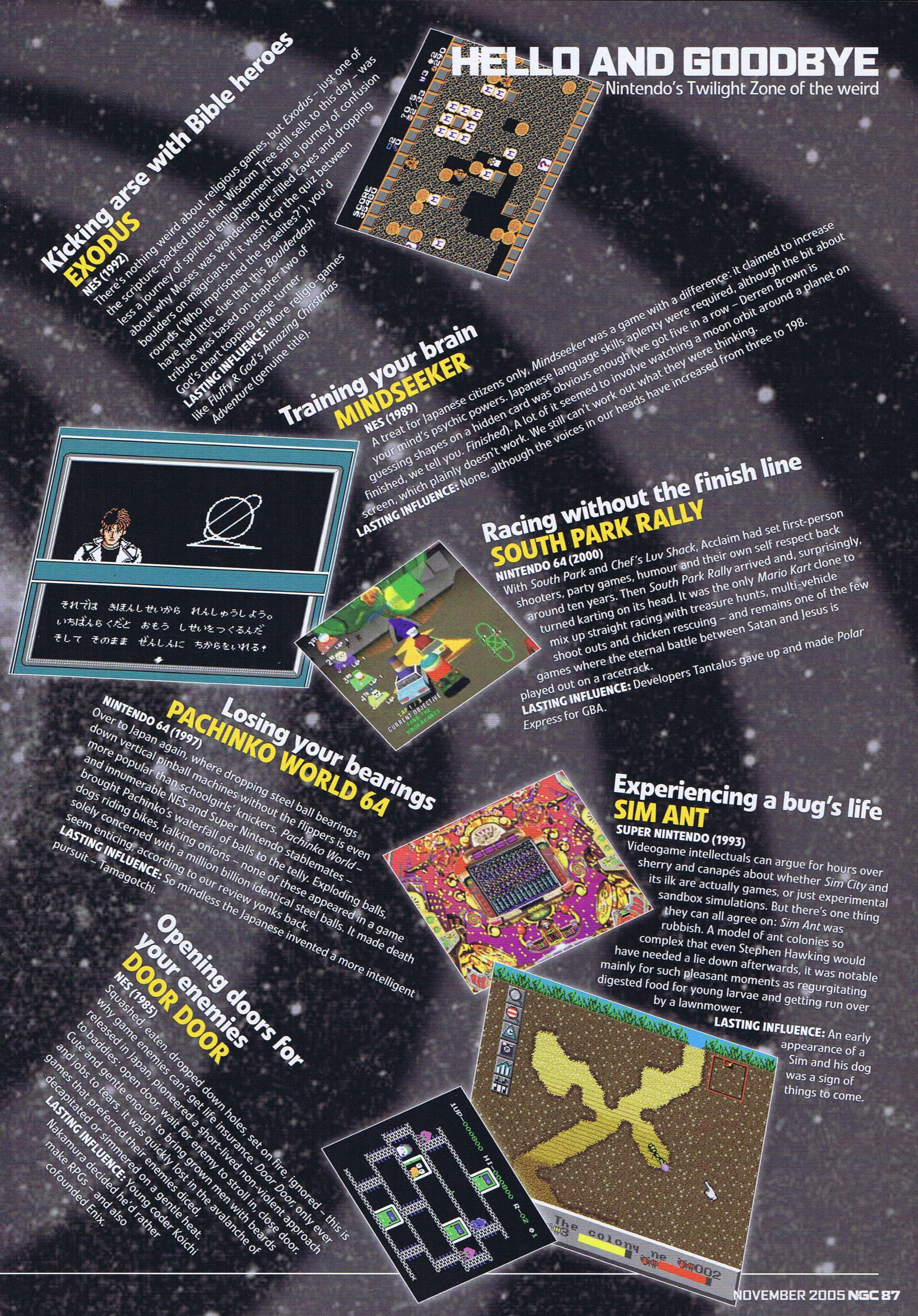


Platforming with a paint pot
SUPER TROLL ISLANDS
SUPER NINTENDO (1994)

Recognise the Trolls? Miniature dolls, candyfloss hair, big in the '70s? No matter – everyone was invited to be scared out of their trousers by their fixed smiles and haunting stares in this one. The odd concept of colouring in a monochrome landscape by walking over it wasn't bad at all, but those shrunken sunburnt heads, those wrinkly old-man mouths chewing on unconscious enemies… We were backing away from the telly just like everyone else.

LASTING INFLUENCE: The Teletubbies seem to have borrowed the Trolls' 'Uh-oh!'





HELLO AND GOODBYE

Nintendo's Twilight Zone of the weird

Kicking arse with Bible heroes
EXODUS

NES (1992)

There's nothing weird about religious games, but *Exodus* – just one of the scripture-packed titles that Wisdom Tree still sells to this day – was less a journey of spiritual enlightenment than a journey of confusion about why Moses was wandering dirt-filled caves and dropping boulders on magicians. If it wasn't for the quiz between rounds ('Who imprisoned the Israelites?'), you'd have had little clue that this *Boulderdash* tribute was based on chapter two of God's chart topping page turner.

LASTING INFLUENCE: More religio-games like *Fluffy* & *God's Amazing Christmas Adventure* (genuine title).

Training your brain
MINDSEEKER

NES (1989)

A treat for Japanese citizens only, *Mindseeker* was a game with a difference: it claimed to increase your mind's psychic powers. Japanese language skills aplenty were required, although the bit about guessing shapes on a hidden card was obvious enough (we got five in a row – Derren Brown is finished, we tell you. *Finished*). A lot of it seemed to involve watching a moon orbit around a planet on screen, which plainly doesn't work. We still can't work out what they were thinking.

LASTING INFLUENCE: None, although the voices in our heads have increased from three to 198.

Racing without the finish line
SOUTH PARK RALLY

NINTENDO 64 (2000)

With *South Park* and *Chef's Luv Shack*, Acclaim had set first-person shooters, party games, humour and their own self respect back around ten years. Then *South Park Rally* arrived and, surprisingly, turned karting on its head. It was the only *Mario Kart* clone to mix up straight racing with treasure hunts, multi-vehicle shoot outs and chicken rescuing – and remains one of the few games where the eternal battle between Satan and Jesus is played out on a racetrack.

LASTING INFLUENCE: Developers Tantalus gave up and made *Polar Express* for GBA.

Losing your bearings
PACHINKO WORLD 64

NINTENDO 64 (1997)

Over to Japan again, where dropping steel ball bearings down vertical pinball machines without the flippers is even more popular than schoolgirls' knickers. *Pachinko World* – and innumerable NES and Super Nintendo stablemates – brought Pachinko's waterfall of balls to the telly. Exploding balls, dogs riding bikes, talking onions – none of these appeared in a game solely concerned with a million billion identical steel balls. It made death seem enticing, according to our review yonks back.

LASTING INFLUENCE: So mindless the Japanese invented a more intelligent pursuit – Tamagotchi.

Experiencing a bug's life
SIM ANT

SUPER NINTENDO (1993)

Videogame intellectuals can argue for hours over sherry and canapés about whether *Sim City* and its ilk are actually games, or just experimental sandbox simulations. But there's one thing they can all agree on: *Sim Ant* was rubbish. A model of ant colonies so complex that even Stephen Hawking would have needed a lie down afterwards, it was notable mainly for such pleasant moments as regurgitating digested food for young larvae and getting run over by a lawnmower.

LASTING INFLUENCE: An early appearance of a Sim and his dog was a sign of things to come.

Opening doors for your enemies
DOOR DOOR

NES (1985)

Squashed, eaten, dropped down holes, set on fire, ignored – this is why game enemies can't get life insurance. *Door Door*, only ever released in Japan, pioneered a short-lived non-violent approach to baddies: open door, wait for enemy to stroll in, close door. Cute and gentle enough to bring grown men with beards and jobs to tears, it was quickly lost in the avalanche of games that preferred their enemies diced, decapitated or simmered on a gentle heat.

LASTING INFLUENCE: Young coder Koichi Nakamura decided he'd rather make RPGs – and also cofounded Enix.



Your future spelled out – badly
TABOO: THE SIXTH SENSE
SUPER NINTENDO (1994)

Unsurprisingly the only ten minute long digital tarot and lottery number picking game ever devised, this was a full price cart (coded by no less than the mighty Rare) which simply put a few tarot cards on the screen and that was it. Spilling over with stuff that would normally be worth a nice telling off from the Nintendo police (nudity, the occult, gambling...), *Taboo* also treated the English language like Plasticine ('Your present position is a conclusion, resolution or healing').

LASTING INFLUENCE: One guy genuinely believes his parakeet died because of this game.

Catching 'em all on camera
POKEMON SNAP
NINTENDO 64 (1999)

Pokémon Snap was essentially a safari hunt – except with a camera instead of a 12-bore shotgun, and nicely-behaved Jigglypuffs and Voltorbs in place of rutting rhinos and cheetahs. A refreshingly original idea, then, and the perfect match for the 'mon, although the buggy's small number of stubbornly fixed paths around the island made *Snap* best for the kind of attention-craving idiots who sit on a rollercoaster for 72 hours at a time. And bus drivers.

LASTING INFLUENCE: Developers Tantalus Photographic sidequests in games like *Zelda: The Wind Waker*.

Platforming – in a car
BANISHING RACER
GAME BOY (1991)

What's the first thing you'd think of doing with a car? Tearing around racetracks at speed, probably. Or, if you're us, taking a lovely day trip to Great Yarmouth and feeding ice cream to seagulls. But platforming? *Banishing Racer* is – we think – the only game ever to take the *Mario Bros* concept and replace the plumber with a bouncing automobile, for hours of eye-drooping fun.

LASTING INFLUENCE: Probably not the last Japanese game to seemingly get B mixed up with V.

Falling over – for fun
PUSHOVER
NES (1992)

Puzzle games have always been home to self-consciously wacky ideas, but *Pushover* decided that matching coloured snakes or lining up biscuits was dangerously crazy, and turned instead to the giddy world of dominoes. It must have taken the coders about a week to realise that a long line of falling bricks was about as likely to sustain people's interest as a dead cat – so by level four, it was suddenly all impossibly floating dominoes and magically materialising platforms.

LASTING INFLUENCE: Bemusing sponsorship from Quavers led the way for in-game advertising.



Gaming for glucose haters
CAPTAIN NOVOLIN

SNES (1992)

There was a noble purpose behind this 'eduhealthertainment' platformer: remind diabetic kids to avoid sugar and keep topped up on Novo Nordisk A/S trademark Novilin® human insulin. Of course, diabetics would rather have had *Super Mario World* and a short talk from the doctor than be subjected to a game whose best idea is a piece of toast on legs. Incidentally, we're not sure what Captain Novolin does on the days when sugary treats aren't invading the Earth.

LASTING INFLUENCE: None, unless *Resi 4* was meant as some kind of warning to haemophiliacs.

Rollercoaster adventure, FTSE 100-style
WALL STREET KID

NES (1990)

Everything was turned into a NES game in the '80s and early '90s, but a game about stocks and shares was just one step away from Super Paint Drying Adventure. From the start – a grinning accountant cheerfully informing you that your uncle has died – to the inevitable end where the last $200 of Uncle Dead's inheritance goes up in smoke on Ill-Advised Innovations Inc, *Wall Street Kid* offered all the excitement of a subscription to The Financial Times.

LASTING INFLUENCE: Teaching kids a valuable lesson about money: don't waste it on a turd like this.

Pet rearing without the cute
FERRET STORY – MY DEAR FERRET

GAME BOY COLOR (2000)

Culture Brain were clearly keen to avoid competing in the overcrowded hamster sim market, but unless there's a shadowy Ferret Promotion League bribing developers, it's hard to imagine why they settled on no one's favourite trouser-tunnelling sausage-rodent. And harder still to work out the reason why 'my dear ferret' insists on replicating such real-life pet-owning joys as getting bitten hard on the finger.

LASTING INFLUENCE: None. Unless Shigsy's got Nintenferrets up his sleeve.

God gaming
ACTRAISER

SUPER NINTENDO (1990)

Forget breeding donkeys with elephants or whatever scientists are up to these days, for *Actraiser*, the mad scientists at Square melded platforming and top-down god gaming into one unnatural whole. One minute you were smacking minotaurs in the teeth with a sword the size of Italy, the next you were lording it over an entire island and sending pint-sized villagers to do your dirty work for you. And the oddest thing? It actually worked.

LASTING INFLUENCE: Had a negative effect on Square – they ditched the god bits for the sequel.

Maze gaming for the lobotomised
SUPER GODZILLA

SUPER NINTENDO (1993)

Godzilla's back! Literally – if old scaly was facing west in this dire maze game, half the screen was filled with a two-frame animation of his rear side. *Super Godzilla* was a shoddy cut and shut job: one half tortuously simplistic maze game, one half turn-based beat-'em-up with five moves. The whole thing was only saved by the unintentional hilarity of 'zilla attacking buildings like a cat pawing at a ball of string. Proof that Godzilla really does move in mysterious ways.

LASTING INFLUENCE: Used as torture to force future *Godzilla* developers to get things right, dammit.

Monkeys punching each other
MONKEY PUNCHER

GAME BOY COLOR (2000)

You really have to wonder. *Monkey Puncher* was weird enough when it was just another head-shakingly obscure Japanese Game Boy cart, but then the English translation exposed it as being as mad as a loaf of hedgehog. Game heroes Kenta ('He's strong and can go to school') and Sumire ('Kenta's sister is better than boys') saw no wrong in rearing monkeys for the sport of punching other monkeys – unsurprisingly not planned for inclusion in the London Olympics. It's a surprise that the RSPCA didn't spontaneously combust.

LASTING INFLUENCE: Sega must have liked it – see *Super Monkey Ball*'s Monkey Fight.



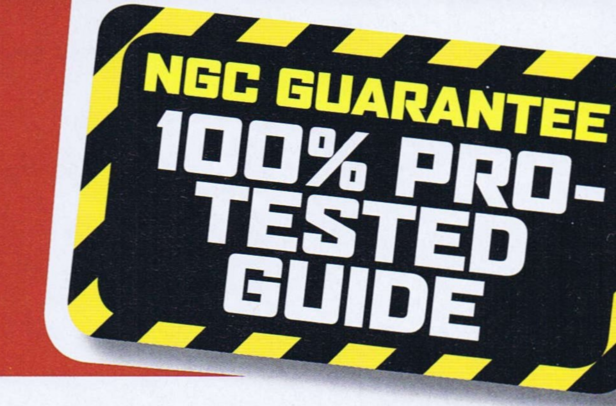


WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT

You play John Raimi, a scientific specialist who's rudely stripped of his body in a bizarre experiment. Your aim is to find your body and have your revenge on the person that took it.

Get all the collectables in

GEIST



LEVEL TWO

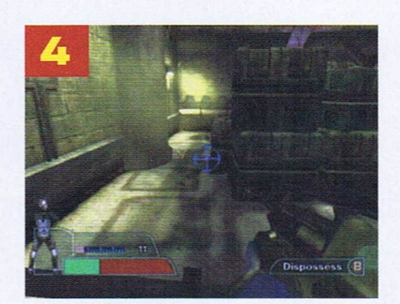
HOST COLLECTABLES

1 After possessing a janitor and walking through the door of what Gigi calls the PC room, you'll see a staircase straight ahead. Don't go up it, go around it instead, then walk under the staircase. Turn left onto the narrow path, walk straight ahead, then make a right. You'll find the collectable at the end of this passage.

2 When you enter the kennels, you'll see the collectable inside the furthest kennel on the right-hand side. To get to it, you'll have to open all of the kennels using the big red button next to the exit door.

3 Look over the railing as soon as you enter the room past the corridor from the spirit checkpoint (there are lots of crates and a large crane in here). The symbol is in plain sight.

4 After you defeat Cord, find the statue of an angel. Possess it, then turn it until you see a light. Two doors will open underneath it – it's through there.



GHOST COLLECTABLES

1 After opening the dog kennels, go back to the door you entered the room through. The first kennel directly to the left of the doorway (upon entering) contains a dog and a slip point. Ignore the dog, go to spirit form and enter the stream. From there, it's just a short walk to find the collectable.

2 Shortly after fighting Cord, you'll make your way to a large cave with some cable cars. Talk to Gigi again, then go to your spirit form and jump down to the bottom. You'll find the lucky bear floating in the water. Go through the slip point embedded in the nearby wall.



LEVEL THREE

HOST COLLECTABLES

1 When you first start the level, possess Phantom (the dog) by possessing his bowl of food and scaring him. Then bark at the guard and he'll open the door for you. Go through it, and you'll see loads of rats. Bark at them to scare them, then possess one of them. Enter the rat hole near the end of the room on the right-hand side, and then take a right at the first intersection. You can't miss it.

2 Go back to the room with the rats and possess Phantom again. Go to the next room. You'll see a pumping machine on the right. Go past it, turn left and you'll see the collectable in a vent. Phantom can jump inside and get it.

3 Keep going and you will eventually get caught and be put back in Phantom's kennel. Get out again and you'll see some platforms nearby that can be ascended with some tricky jumping. They will eventually lead you over the racks of cable and up to a vent. Go through the vent. The collectable will be under a small alcove on the right-hand side of the next room you come to.



4 Solve all of the rivet puzzles in the reactor room. Once you do, a locker containing the collectable will open up.

GHOST COLLECTABLES

1 Once you reach the science lab with the laptop, fuses and engineer inside (you should be able to get there through a slip point, so you'll be in your spirit form when you come in) go through the hallway, into the lift room, through the closed gate on the right-hand side and make right turns at every wall you hit. You should see a set of explosive boxes against a wall. Blow it up and go through the slip point that is revealed. You will find the collectable here.

2 This one is just along the stairs to the reactor room. Keep looking at the centre of the room, somewhere around the first landing. You may want to clear out the guards before you try to pick the collectable up, though.



WHAT WE SAID IN LAST ISSUE!

Despite some genuinely innovative moments, Geist is far too patchy to make a satisfying game, which really is a disappointment. With a little more thought and polish, this could have been something special.

NGC **61**

LEVEL FOUR

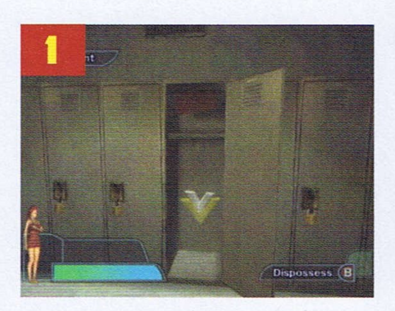
HOST COLLECTABLES

1 After you've possessed the showering woman with the red hair, open one of the lockers in the adjacent locker room. The locker is in the row across from the blonde woman's (provided you scared her off). It's the same colour as the other lockers, so keep an eye out for it.

2 After entering the morgue, go down the stairs and through the door, then go straight ahead and through the first door you see. The collectable is on the ground.

3 Go back out, then finish exploring the morgue. Open the refrigerator you find there for the collectable.

4 Once you pick up the refrigerator keycard (distract the doctor in the populated intensive care unit to get it), go all the way back to the corridor that connects the laundry room, shower room, etc. You'll now be able to open the door at the end of the hallway that was previously locked and grab the collectable inside.





GHOST COLLECTABLES

1 Near the start of the level, you'll come out of the tunnel and see a gap. Float over this gap to the next tunnel. At the end of it is the collectable.

2 Look for a manhole cover near the door with the medical wing sign next to it. Possess it, pop it open, and go through the slip point.



2

LEVEL FIVE

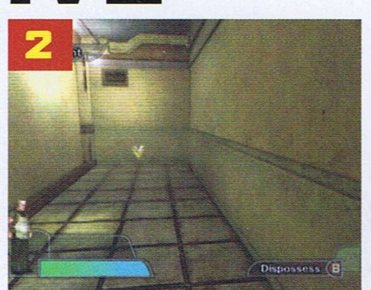
HOST COLLECTABLES

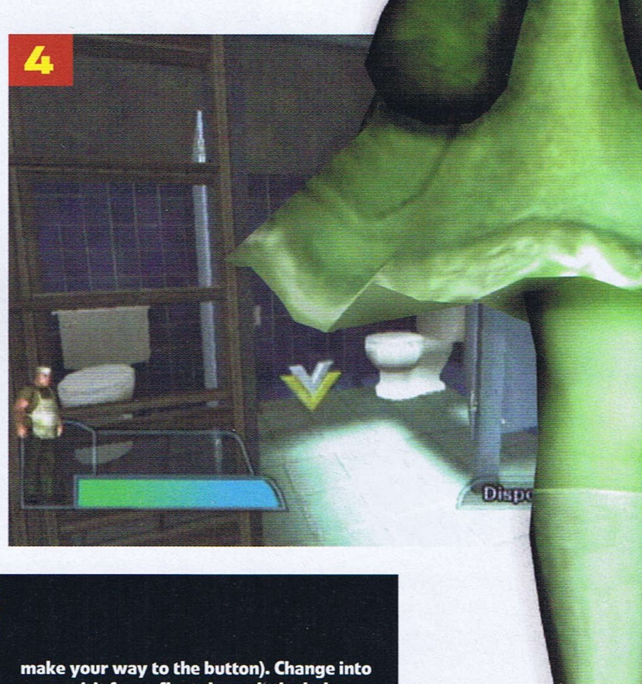
1 In the second room of the level, go all the way to the far right corner. You'll see a garage door to one side, with the first Host collectable in front of it.

2 In the mess hall, go up the staircase, turn right and follow the hallway to the collectable.

3 Possess the cook or the scientist and head back into the pantry (You'll find the door to it next to the sink the cook was washing up in). It's in here.

4 Head out of the main entrance to the mess hall, turn right and follow the arrows to the lounge. In the lounge, go to the men's toilet. The collectable is next to the ladder.





GHOST COLLECTABLES

1 In the first room you enter, clear out the enemies, then turn to the right where the elevator shaft is. You'll see boxes on conveyor belts. Shoot all of the ones that don't look plain (this includes the ones marked fragile, boom, and the ones with black and yellow stripes). There are more on the left-hand side as well. Destroy all of them on one side. You'll trigger a cutscene showing you the first Ghost collectable for the level. Change to your spirit form and grab it.

2 In the next room, clear out the enemies, but don't press the large red button in the station above that brings out the boxes. Instead, look up to your left as soon as you finish moving up the ramp (but before you make your way to the button). Change into your spirit form, float through the hole where the boxes go and keep going until you see a fence. Pass through it and claim your collectable. Now you can leave, activate the boxes and progress through the level as normal.

LEVEL SIX

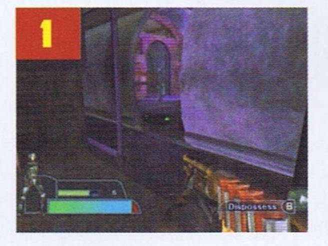
HOST COLLECTABLES

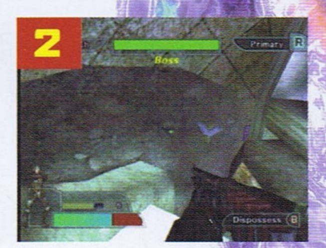
1 Once you reach the train, keep moving through the gap in the cars instead of entering it. Turn right, walk through the narrow passage and it's there.

2 When you encounter the boss for the first time in this level, look down and to the right, just outside of the car.

3 The next collectable is at the end of the next train car you move through, it's in the final booth of seats to your left, just before opening the door to exit said car.

4 When you fight the boss again, make your way up the stairs. Once you do, make a U-turn, bearing right, to see another short staircase leading to the collectable. Watch out for the spiders.









GHOST COLLECTABLES

1 This one's near the bridge that gets destroyed. Once you've seen the cutscene where it gets destroyed, move ahead and look carefully until you see a stone overpass. Jump on the nearby rocks to get to it. From there, follow the path (don't jump the gap, just walk along the path), and follow it to the collectable.

2 As you enter the room with the group of statues, head for the first passage on the right. Look behind the counter and you'll see the collectable on your right.





LEVEL SEVEN

HOST COLLECTABLES

1 Look behind the pillar to your right, just before the first door to the generator room.

2 When you reach the room that only a scientist can enter, you'll see an intersection. Head right, up the rubble and you'll see another platform. Jump on it then keep bearing right.

3 Head back to the ground level of the same room and find the door to the security room. Go into ghost form and slip through. Follow the wall on the left and you'll find a small space. Possess a guard, and check behind the boxes.

4 In the final room, just before the boss.





GHOST COLLECTABLES

1 Once you escape training, possess someone and go up the staircase. Go through the door, turn left and go straight on until you see four red lights. Stand on them and turn right. The collectable is behind the object.

2 Go up the long flight of stairs you come to when you enter the power room. When you reach the final long flight just before the last short set that puts you at ground level, float straight ahead and land on the support beam sticking out from the corner. Turn left, float to the next beam, then turn and float one more time and you're there.





LEVEL EIGHT

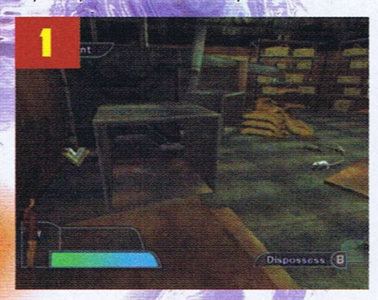
HOST COLLECTABLES

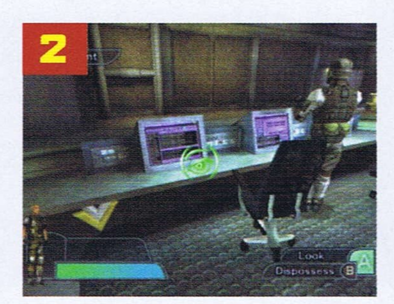
1 This is in the same room where you found Juliet, the white pet rat. Look behind a piece of vent just behind her.

2 Behind the desk where the guard stands in the check-in room.

3 Upon exiting the elevator that takes you up to the floor with your armour, go behind the elevator on the right-hand side, and move until you find the collectable between two crates.

4 While fighting through the compound, you'll come across a dilapidated corporate van inside a garage. The collectable is right next to it.







GHOST COLLECTABLES

1 Go to the room where you scare Rourke with the dog, then possess him (the control room), you'll see a slip point next to the particle beam. Go through it. You'll need to float from some ruins on the far end of the room to get to the collectable.

2 Once Rourke gets his armour, enter the next room and clear it out. The collectable is near the exit, on top of a stack of crates.





LEVEL NINE

HOST COLLECTABLES

1 After winning your helipad fights and leaving, the second room you enter will contain a big ladder and a rocket sniper. Go through the lower passage to find the collectable.

2 While you're fighting in the caverns past the room with the big ladder, you'll encounter a basement with two rooms, one on the left and one on the right. Clear out the one on the right and it's next to one of the barrels.

3 This one is directly under you and to the left as soon as you cross the large courtyard at ground level and enter the ruined library. Jump to the ground and look under the rubble.

4 Once you go up the staircase in the large courtyard area, you'll have the option to turn left and onto the large suspension bridge that crosses the entire area. Don't. Instead, keep going straight on, step up to the window, then out onto a small ledge. Keep an eye out, though, the symbol blends in with the wall.

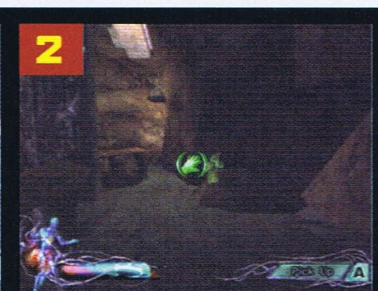


GHOST COLLECTABLES

1 In the room with the large ladder, the same one as the first Host collectable. It's on the ledge near the ladder.

2 Once you enter the ruined library, the collectable will be on the far left corner of the room. Float over to it using the rubble to get there.

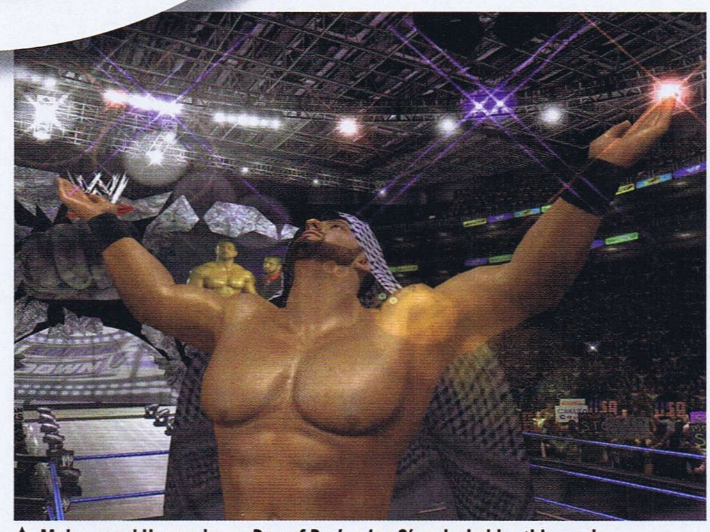




NGC GUARANTEE
TIPS, CHEATS
PROBLEMS SOLVED
EVERYTHING
YOU NEED!

THE TIPS YOU NEED FOR THE GAMES YOU'RE PLAYING…

TIPS EXTRA



△ Mohammed Hassan loves *Day of Reckoning 2's* unlockables this much.

WWE: DAY OF RECKONING 2

UNLOCKABLE ARENAS

ARMAGEDDON ARENA
Complete the Armageddon Pay Per View.

BACKLASH ARENA (EXHIBITION MATCHES ONLY)
Reach the Pay Per View for Backlash during Story mode.

NO MERCY ARENA
Complete the No Mercy Pay Per View.

NO WAY OUT ARENA
Complete the No Way Out Pay Per View.

ROYAL RUMBLE ARENA
Complete the Royal Rumble Pay Per View.

SUMMERSLAM ARENA (EXHIBITION MATCHES ONLY)
Reach the Pay Per View for the Summerslam in Story mode.

SURVIVOR SERIES ARENA
Complete the Survivor Series Pay Per View.

UNFORGIVEN ARENA
Complete the Unforgiven Pay Per View.

VENGEANCE ARENA (EXHIBITION MATCHES ONLY)
Win the Vengeance match during Story mode.

WRESTLEMANIA ARENA
Complete the WrestleMania Pay Per View.

SONIC GEMS COLLECTION

SONIC CD CODES
Enter these codes at the title screen.

HIGH SCORES
Right, Right, Up, Up, Down, A.

SOUND TEST
Down, Down, Down, Left, Right, A.

STAGE SELECT
Up, Down, Down, Left, Right, A.

SONIC CD UNLOCKABLES
You can unlock new modes by getting fast times.

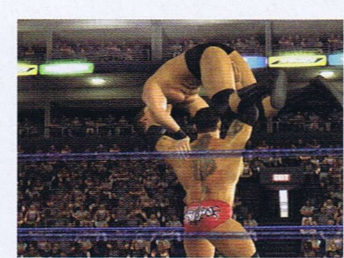
PLAY MUSIC
Get a total time of 37' 27" 57 or less.

TIME ATTACK IN SPECIAL STAGES
Get a total time of 30' 21" 05 or less. Then press Left when on the Time Attack screen.

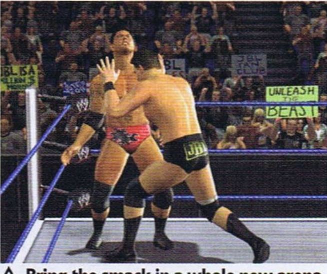
VISUAL MODE
Get a total time of 25' 46" 12 or less.

SONIC CD SOUND TEST
Enter these codes in Sound Test mode to unlock the items.

CUTE PICTURE OF SONIC
PM 11 DA 09



△ Take your moves to a new audience.



△ Bring the smack in a whole new arena.

SONIC SUPERHERO PICTURE
PM 04 DA 21

PLAY A SECRET STAGE
PM 07 DA 07

JAPANESE MESSAGE
PM 12 DA 25

TAILS PICTURE/DEBUG MODE
PM 12 DA 11

SONIC, METAL SONIC AND ROBOTNIK ARTWORK
PM 03 DA 01

TAILS ADVENTURE
Enter the following passwords.

ALL ITEMS AND LEVEL SELECT
ADE7 AA2A 51A6 6D12

ALL ITEMS WITH FIRST STAGE COMPLETED
A2E1 A424 51A1 6D1A

START A NEW GAME WITH ALL CHAOS EMERALDS
D219 54D4 9EA9 D6EE

VECTORMAN CODES
Enter these codes at any point during gameplay.

FILL HEALTH BAR
B, A, Right, B, X, B, Down, B, A, Right, B.

SLOW MOTION
Down, Right, B, X, Up, Left, B.



△ Tails off on an adventure ahead.

TAXI MODE
X, B, Left, Left, B, X, B, A

MADDEN '06

CARD CODES
Select My Madden at the main menu, then select Madden Cards and finally Madden Codes to enter the card codes.

ALL STADIUMS
555128

CLASSIC TEAMS
614897

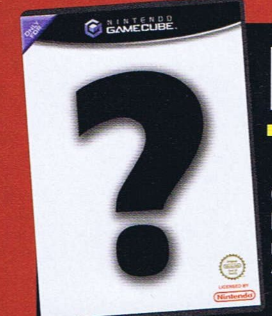
DONOVAN MCNABB GOLD CARD
5E8H1A



△ All your Sonic prayers answered.



△ There's a whole host of things to unlock in *Sonic Gems Collection.*



READERS' TOP TEN TIPS

Can you out-tip Tips Extra? Send in your hint-tastic helps and we'll 'sort out' the top tipster with a mystery prize from Geraint's 'special drawer'. Chances are, it'll be a game.



1. HARVEST MOON

The cycle of life

If you're waiting for a certain season or day, then simply keep tapping the sleep button. Although you do have to make sure you take some time to do your essential chores (watering, eating, feeding your livestock etc). This is also great for growing your crops quickly.

Matt Powell, Bilston

2. RESIDENT EVIL 4

Die Baghead, die

You can kill Baghead with a handgun. All you need to do is make sure you shoot him in the head, then kick him while he's stunned.

Lee Emmot, Leeds

3. SKIES OF ARCADIA

Moral compass

When you're near a discovery, your compass will twitch uncontrollably. Press A when this happens and the discovery is yours.

Alex Buddon, Southampton

4. RESIDENT EVIL 4

Mercantile

Get back in the boat when you start Chapter 2-1. You'll see the merchant's blue flames ahead of you. There's loads of cash, some ammo and the green gem for the elegant mask is on the roof.

Sam Bridget, Farnham

5. ANIMAL CROSSING

Fruity fruiterer

You will need two memory cards. For this Make two games, then have your character visit the other town. Get as much fruit as you can hold and go back to your town. As each town should have different native fruits, they should be worth loads.

Ian Lynch, Ireland

6. STAR FOX: ASSAULT

Sneaky sniping

In Cornelia city, get into an Arwing and go to the large building at the centre. Get out onto the small ledge at the top of it and jump to the top with the booster pack. While you're here you are invincible, but you can attack enemies with the sniper rifle and rocket launcher.

Dave Bellemy, York

7. SPLINTER CELL CHAOS THEORY

Blowing their own trumpet

In level 5, in the small cafe next to the hallway with the lasers, you can hear two guards talking about how big a hit Ubisoft will have with *Prince of Persia: Warrior Within.*

Dean Randall, Perth

8. HITMAN 2

Level Up

Select New Game from the main menu, press back at the difficulty selection screen, then select Current Game. You will now be able to access all the missions. However, by doing this you will delete your current save.

Rich Maney, Dundee

9. TIMESPLITTERS FUTURE PERFECT

Tune!

If you use the action button on the organ in the Captain Ash level, it will play the Anaconda theme from *Timesplitters 2.*

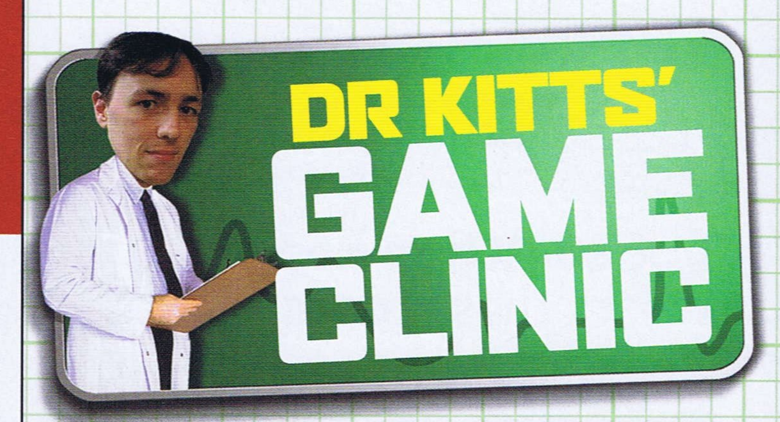
Ashley Gibbons, Worcester

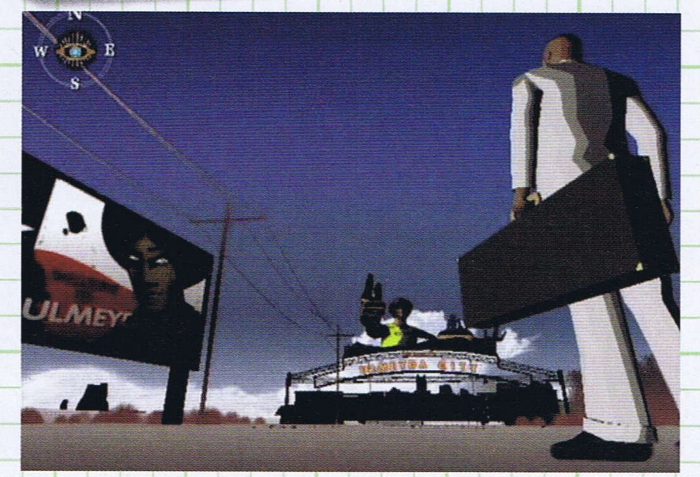
10. PRINCE OF PERSIA THE SANDS OF TIME

Healthy gaming

Connect the GBA *PoP: Sands of Time* to the Gamecube with a link-up cable and you'll get infinite health.

Andrew Dylan, Northolt





Dr Kitts: operating with a sawn-off and a hunting knife.

Dr Kitts,
I'm stuck on the Sunset Part 2 level of *Killer 7.* I've got the soul shell from the draw with the card, and I don't know what to do next. I'm going around in circles.
Andy Cooper, Sevenoaks

Dr Kitts oils up his rifle. It looks like it's time to send horsey off to the glue factory.
You will have noticed the horse racing machine a little way on from the soul shell in the drawer. You need to enter the correct sequence of numbers to unlock another soul shell. This isn't too difficult, but you have to know where to look. You can find the numbers on the poster with horses on it. Note down the winning race order, then carry on with the level. If you can't be bothered to do that, the sequence is 1, 4, 3, 7, 6, 2, 5.

Dr Kitts,
Having seen the screens of *Twilight Princess* and been suitably impressed, I thought I'd play through *Wind Waker* as I hadn't played it before. I've got to the final battle with Ganondorf and I just can't beat him. How do you do it?
Dave Salles, Manchester

Dr Kitts remembers the happy days before the darkness came. Before the voices started. It all seems so long ago…
Ganondorf is a tough one to crack. Although you do have some help in the form of Zelda herself, who is constantly attacking him with light arrows. It's best to let her concentrate on attacking Ganondorf while you constantly line the two of them up so she's hitting him. To do this, keep backing and jumping away from him, trying to keep him between you and Zelda. When Zelda hits him he will be stunned, so get in there and deal him some pain.

Eventually, Ganondorf's attack pattern will change. He will hit Zelda and knock her unconscious, leaving you to deal with him on your own. His attack pattern this time around takes the form of a slashing attack, then a spinning attack, and finally a jumping attack. Avoid the first two, and then parry the jumping attack. This will stun him and allow you to let loose a couple of combos on his back. Keep at it and wear his energy down.

Eventually, Zelda will wake up and will start firing light arrows at him again. There really isn't much you can do here, so just avoid Ganondorf's attacks and make sure you keep out of the way.

After a while, Zelda will adopt a new tactic, she will fire the arrows at you, and you have to deflect them onto Ganondorf using your mirror shield. When you hit him, he'll be stunned. Lock onto him, approach, then parry his attack to win.



Got an Action Replay?
Whack these codes into it…





INCREDIBLE HULK ULTIMATE DESTRUCTION

Master Code
XBUD-03RF-3EKZF
K2BN-YQMK-AMD78

All Moves For Free
VVA3-89H7-JWZKP
BE25-854E-R9Y8W

Infinite Health
PBAJ-KX0Z-FDVWR
ERKT-N5V8-HXZ7T

Move Faster
F1P0-AUV7-ZT1YB
FC2D-BUN0-XP9JV

Loads of Smash Points
E1N3-W4N5-NBEU3
PGGZ-6HVJ-AYYE4

This code must be on for the codes below
CR2J-RP2V-R204T
8DZJ-F423-07V3J

Hulk Wears Canadian Shorts
N6X5-WH1X-VDK6Z
BYC9-7QUD-R5ZPY

Hulk Wears American Shorts
NDUV-E6MU-04N5P
TN2C-GH85-E31N3

Hulk Wears French Shorts
3CFA-59RP-2YDF8
GFNQ-ME1W-5P1BJ

Hulk Wears German Shorts
GCJN-KRN0-DN8VN
Z1B3-YWN5-R76TP

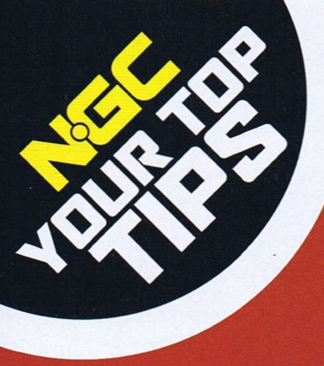
Hulk Wears Italian Shorts
D2CU-55Y8-E1AMF
0NGE-JWW4-QXH09



Hulk Wears Union Jack Shorts
Y9U2-909P-Z7RPQ
88XW-49HP-E8EH9

Hulk Wears Aussie Shorts
MXGF-HWGG-W4XUK
RDE3-NZ2D-ZT305

Hulk Wears Spanish Shorts
XWNP-Y2GG-DYRBH
WUQC-0XAP-92659



YOUR TOP TIPS SHARE THE KNOWLEDGE AND BAG YOURSELF A PRIZE…

Found an interesting tip, secret or quirk in one of your games? Send it into us immediately! Each month we'll stick the best into our Readers' Tips section. If yours is the number one readers' tip, we'll send you a game. Good, huh? Just don't send us cheat codes from the 'net…

HERE'S MY TOP TIP…

IT'S FOR

AND THIS IS HOW IT WORKS

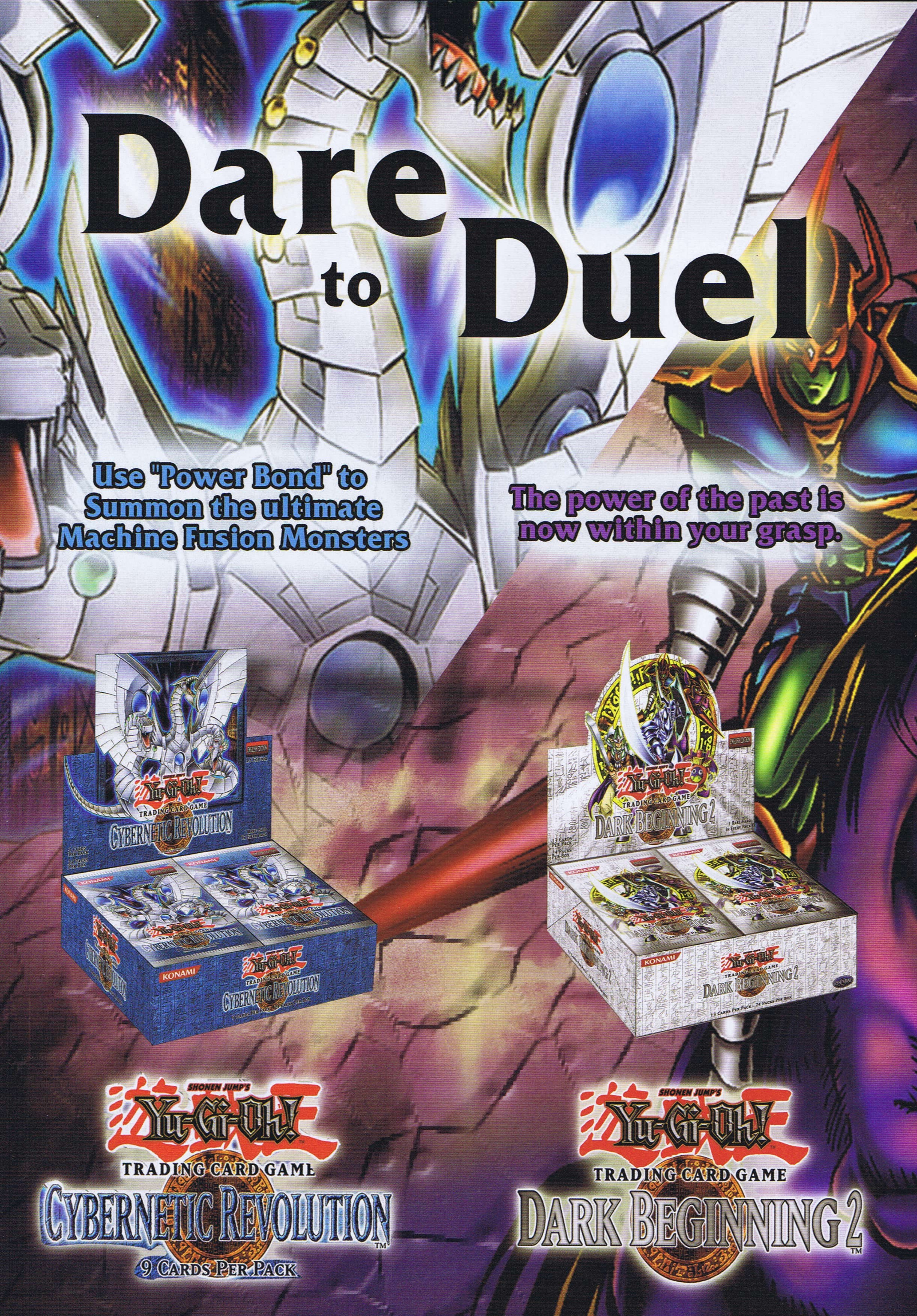
Name ....

Address ....

.... Postcode ....

Send to:
TIPS EXTRA, **NGC**, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, BA1 2BW
or e-mail ngc@futurenet.co.uk

If you don't want to cut up your magazine, send a photocopy or scribble your entry on a piece of paper and then send it to us. Or just buy two copies of the mag. That way you can keep a spare copy in the khazi. You know, to help focus your mind.



Dare to Duel
Use "Power Bond" to Summon the ultimate Machine Fusion Monsters
The power of the past is now within your grasp.
SHONEN JUMP'S
Yu-Gi-Oh!
TRADING CARD GAME
CYBERNETIC REVOLUTION
9 CARDS PER PACK
SHONEN JUMP'S
Yu-Gi-Oh!
TRADING CARD GAME
DARK BEGINNING 2
KONAMI

30 MONMOUTH STREET/BATH/BA1 2BW

MAILBOX

STAR LETTER

If you send us the best letter of the month, you'll receive a shiny new Gamecube (or GBA/DS) game from our bulging sack of shiny new games. Lovely.

"Delayed"

Zelda delayed to April 2006? I can't believe my eyes. I am very disappointed, but if the extra months make the game better then I am for it. Those last screenshots do prove again that this game will rock (the shot with all those people in the marketplace – just amazing). But I have a sneaking suspicion that there is something strange at hand. It will release at around the same time as the Revolution. Maybe Nintendo can't win this generation of console wars with this game, but Revolution will be backwards compatible, so they must be hoping that people will buy a Revolution just for the new *Zelda*. The worst-case scenario would be that the new *Zelda* gets the Revolution logo stamped on the box. Then I must buy the machine, otherwise I'll miss out on probably the best game in years.
Henrie van Meurs, Netherlands

PS I thought that Shigeru Miyamoto was hugely involved in the project, but I have a feeling that he is not on the case at all. Don't say that he is wasting his time on some weak DS games. The new *Zelda* game already looks fantastic, but it could be even better with some Shigsy magic.

You know, I wouldn't be at all surprised if Twilight Princess turns out to be a Revolution launch title. Nintendo claimed the game was actually finished before E3 in May, so taking it back into development for 'improvements' is a quite a turnaround. With this generation of hardware gradually fizzling out (eg all of Microsoft's remaining Xbox projects were shunted onto their next-gen console several months ago), an extra year of development time could be just enough to spruce up the graphics and redo the textures for a more powerful machine; one that can attract the kind of publicity the Gamecube will not be able to muster in mid-2006.

Not that I think Nintendo would deliberately disappoint Gamecube owners – to engage in more wild speculation, perhaps the game will work on both consoles but with enhanced visuals on Revolution.

As for Shigsy's involvement, well, the last* Zelda *game he actually directed was* Ocarina Of Time. *Apparently he finds it a bit embarrassing that he keeps getting all the credit when the man in the driving seat since* Majora's Mask *has been Eiji Aonuma. Ed

Bonus Letters

When I left Hong Kong I was quite happy to say goodbye to that little freak.
Chris Owen, Glastonbury
There's no escaping him. Ed

And than it goes into all the details, and you see a picture of a house.
Vagnur Thomsen, Faroe Islands
I'm imagining it right now. Ed

If you do happen to hear anything about a sequel/prequel could you pleeeeease write about it?
Elliot Kruszynski, Gloucester
Oh, okay then. Ed

I'm not complaining but it gets on my nerves!
Roshan Appadoo, London
Even if it doesn't get on my nerves I always complain. Ed

If you just press fire repeatedly you will never, EVER lose.
Xanthe Hoad, via email
That's how they tricked me into playing* Ikaruga. *Ed

EMAIL US!

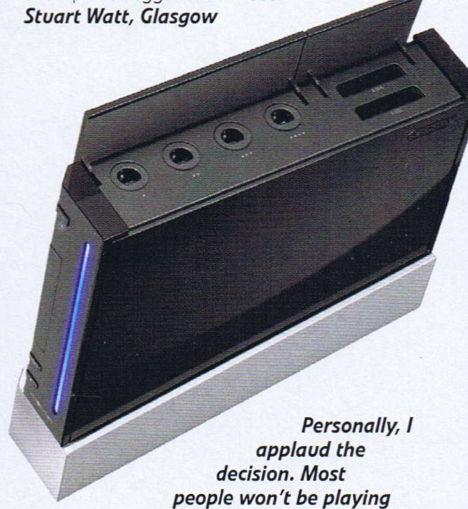
Got something to say? Run out of stamps? Guards won't let you near a pen? Then log on to the interweb and 'get' us 'at'...

ngc@futurenet.co.uk

Include your name and address so we know who to credit the letter to. Do it! Do it! Do it now!

"Niche"

Nintendo's decision to adopt a WiFi-only online structure for the Revolution baffles me. Maybe I am mistaken, but I believe WiFi to be a relatively niche technology, and one which could turn out to be expensive to adopt. Therefore I feel that Nintendo may be alienating a lot of their fanbase who have neither the desire nor the finances to invest in WiFi technology in order to play online. When you also factor in the possibility of charges for third-party online games, playing online with the Revolution could be quite expensive and could have a knock-on effect on the Revolution's sales. It is a good idea in principle, but in reality I fear Nintendo may end up with egg on their faces.
Stuart Watt, Glasgow



Personally, I applaud the decision. Most people won't be playing Revolution in the same room as the family computer, and how many houses are wired up with network sockets in the living room or bedrooms? Without WiFi, you'd need an expensive mess of routers and cables all over the place. Also, everyone who goes online with DS will have WiFi anyway. And having used several consoles, including Gamecube, online via third-party wireless adapters, I can testify to WiFi's pleasantly non-techy ease of use. It's the future. Ed

"Improve on"

I *so* can't wait for *Zelda*, until I heard that it's going to be delayed until next year, which is bad news on one hand but good news on the other. They say they want to improve it, which could mean more dungeons, meaner bosses,



HONOURABLE MENTIONS
Thanks to everyone who wrote in, including (but not limited to): Ryan Dunkley, via email; Henry Tsang, Sudbury; Luke Bowyer, Cheshire; Øystein Heden Kålås, Norway; G Redshaw, via email; Joachim Johnsen, Norway; Charlie McDonnell, Bath; David Crawford, Leicester; Ross Main, Ulverston; Gilles Reuse, Belgium; Rhys Simons, via email; Greg Calder, Edinburgh; Richard Ashton, Andover; Andrew Douglas, Glasgow; Paul Harries, Aberystwyth; William Oakley, Cambridge; Michael Bowen, via email; Chris O'Neill, Ireland; Stephen Rees, via email; Adam Smith, Liverpool; Daniel Entwistle, Bolton; Cameron Wildsmith, Newcastle; Trevor Byrne, Dublin; Bradley

arse-kicking action and non-stop excitement. It looks great and I just know I'm going to love it.

My love for *Zelda* only started with *Wind Waker*, because I never owned an N64. *Wind Waker* was great; it was new and different from anything I'd ever played. I'm especially excited about the new one because I never got the chance to play *Ocarina Of Time* like everyone else did – sure, I got it free with *Wind Waker*, but I can't handle those graphics nowadays.

This game is just what my Gamecube has been waiting for – another great game to play for hours on end. The fact that they want more time to improve it is reassuring, as *Wind Waker* was too short, and now they can improve on that by adding extra levels and dungeons.

I heard somewhere that Link may get a voice – this is also good news for me because I prefer to be able to hear the characters instead of reading what they have to say. On other games like this I have accidentally pressed a button and skipped a whole sentence of what they have to say.

This game is going to be the last major Gamecube release. I can't wait for those moments riding through Hyrule field on Epona's back, figuring out more dungeons and kicking Ganon's arse one last time! I hope people understand that *Zelda* is a great game and you can't knock it until you try it.

Tony Southion, London

***You should definitely give* Ocarina *another go, if only to keep you busy until* Twilight Princess *arrives. It's an incredible game and you'll soon get used to the graphics.* Ed**

"Too real"

I've noticed lately – and it frustrates me to a certain extent – that Nintendo seems to be including Mario in a lot of games that I find are rather un-Mario-like, such as baseball, football etc. It seems that the creators think they can pick a sport and bung Mario into it just to be able to say that they have a new Mario game in the works. I can stand new generations of *Mario Tennis, Golf* and *Kart* – of course I can – but it just isn't the same as a new Mario platformer. *Mario Sunshine*, while not as good as *Mario 64*, did use a novel idea – FLUDD adds whole new possibilities. Also, the sight of a new *Mario Party*... oh joy! We can do without another birthday bash, thank you very much. I'm sure *Mario Football* will be great and all, but it seems Nintendo are straying away from the Mushroom Kingdom and into the Premiership. It seems too real to be a Mario game.

I would rather have *Mario 128*, please. Sorry if I sound like I'm not up to trying new things, but it just seems lazy to pile a load of Mario characters into yet another sports game.

Eoin O'Callaghan, Ireland

***Mario is definitely putting himself about a whole lot more than he ever did in the past, but there was a time when even* Super Mario Kart *seemed like a rather odd thing to do with a platforming hero. Who knows which of these new ventures will turn out to be future classics?* Ed**

Bonus Letters

Isn't mashing your friend for the last bit of pizza even more fun?
Adam Whyle, Hemel Hempstead
***Fun, but not as tasty as a plain old margherita.* Ed**

If this is true I will be delighted.
Ben Dormand, Sidmouth
***Sadly it's false.* Ed**

Well how wrong you all are.
Tom Longley, Maidstone
***More wrong than you could possibly imagine.* Ed**

I saw something scary at Gamestation the other day. It was a Nintendo DS. In the retro section. Yeah. It scared me too.
Chris Booth, via email
***It's like somebody just walked over my grave.* Ed**

There is only one Nintendo developed game in your directory with a score of 90+ that isn't a sequel of some sort (*Animal Crossing*, ranked a lowly 26th)
Tom Laverack, Crowthorne
Animal Crossing *is actually an updated port of a Japan-only N64 game.* Ed

Anyway, here's an excerpt from Orwell's essay on English Socialism.
Danny Rafferty, via email
***Cheers.* Ed**

"Warping"

Sorry, but could you please stop calling Mario a him, he, man, dude or fella? It is a computer sprite! It has no gender, nor is it real. You're warping young minds and I urge you to stop it. You can play games and develop your opinions about them all day long, but at least don't bastardise the English language. You are supposed to be journalists are you not? Report factually! Don't mess up my kids' English grades – 'cos I read it in a magazine' does not excuse bad English. It's your fault – at least have some professional pride. It may be a job to you but it's our children's future. By the way, what did Mr Kitts study to pass his masters degree and then go on to do his doctorate? He's not a fictional character yet he claims to be a doctor! I do not think he is a doctor but my kids do. Why it's-a him?

Anonymous, via email

***I am absolutely gobsmacked. I would have printed your letter unedited to illustrate how your 'kids' may have inherited their poor English, but it was full of naughty words that made me blush.* Ed**

"The sheer joy"

I can't believe I recently managed to get my hands on *Twilight Princess!* The Edinburgh Interactive Entertainment Festival took place in August, and one of the many games they had there was *Twilight Princess*. I played it, and it looked and felt fantastic! There were a few playable levels (I think the same as at E3) starting with the scene at the village, where you get to round up goats on Epona, the Forest Temple, where you get the Gale Boomerang, the Temple Boss, and my favourite, a level where you chase the guy who's kidnapped the village girl and have to fight off moblins on wild boars. The graphics, music and mood were phenomenal throughout, but I really, really want to buy and play it now! This letter is incredibly incoherent, but I just wanted to share the sheer joy of playing the new *Zelda* game before most members of the public. Oh yes, and brag a bit... Ha ha ha, I played *Twilight Princess! Cough*. Sorry.

Alison Wilson, Edinburgh

CORRECTION CORNER

On page 34 in issue 109 you said, 'anyone who's player Spider-Man 2'. Now that's a pretty obvious mistake don't you think? Why don't you send out preview copies to your loyal fans so people can check for mistakes, then print them for real? Otherwise you're just gonna keep getting shown up by your readers.

Callum Black, London

***Is that it? One measly spelling mistake from three issues ago? Either we're getting better or you lot are slacking.* Ed**


PUNY HUMANS

THE INCREDIBLE HULK: ULTIMATE DESTRUCTION

Unstoppable force meets easily-stoppable humans – that's hardly fair, is it?

FACTFILE

ANYONE WHO'S PLAYER SPIDER-MAN 2 WILL BE PRETTY FAMILIAR WITH ULTIMATE DESTRUCTION

Gunson, Preston; Alanna Donnelly, Preston; Robert Murad, Totteridge; Chris Bounds, via email; Aranpreet Bhangal, Slough; Sean Sewell, via email; Salman Azad, via email; Ingvar Gausden, via email; Michael Williams, Wirral; Dan Robinson, Skipton; Euan Black, Fife; Dom Whittall, Woodley; Andrew Cruickshank, Chester-le-Street; Alasdair Henry, Morpeth; G J Thow, Elgin; Christopher Ramsden, Sheffield; Peter Taylor-Fitch, Jersey; Jason Sharpe, Milton Keynes; Leigh Collingsworth, via email; Sarah Smith, Gloucester; Richard McCartney, via email; D Allen, via email; Harry Gregg, London; Lucas Mallender, Belgium; Callum Black, Balham; Liam Dwek, Bristol; Sam Rose, Bingham; and all the rest of you. Thanks, folks.



***I'm delighted you enjoyed it. We can all be fairly certain that* Twilight Princess*, whenever it eventually shows up, isn't going to be a let-down for the fans.* Ed**

"Kooloo-Limpah"

Ode to Tingle

Oh you weird little bugger,
You made it like a mugger.
In your tight green suit,
Thinking you are cute.
You're a little drama queen,
Do you know someone garbed
in green?
Why it's Mr Fairy, that's
his name,
For the good of Hyrule he
will chop your brain.
You have to have your cousins carry
out your plan,
Come on for once just act like a man.
Kooloo-Limpah is the last thing you
will say,
'Cause we all notice that you are
very gay.
So now it's ended, Hyrule's dead,
Ganon's the king, hail him for chopping
your head.

So never again will we see those maps,
You were never meant to be in *Minish Cap*.
Wind Waker was your last 3D game,
Get here now so I can slice your brain.
In fact you were never meant to see
Hyrule Plain.

Tingle we won't miss you, mate.

Kooloo-Limpah!
Daniel Leigh, Jersey

***The thing that I find somewhat alarming,
Is your morbid obsession with Tingle-harming,
Why all the violence in your letter?
Wouldn't some loving be so much better?
Tingle clearly makes you swoon,
As he dangles beneath his manly balloon.
It wouldn't be right of me to assume,
But why don't you two get a room?
Kooloo-Limpah!* Ed**

"Paisanos"

Just a quick note in response to the We Love Mario article in issue 110. At the end of the piece on 'The Super Showman' you say you never found out what 'paisanos' meant.

The true definition of paisano is a person of the same country or region (fellow countrymen/women), a term used more frequently in south Mexico. The reason it has become so widespread in the US is because the Mexican government created the cross-border Paisano Program many years ago to deal with Mexicans living in the US who regularly crossed the border back into Mexico. The wandering Mexicans complained about being charged the same standard fee that foreigners were forced to pay to cross the border into the dustbowl beyond.

The government stopped charging the fee in April 2000 but the paisanos (in this case Mexicans living in the US) must apply for the FME (Forma Migratoria Estadistica) which would prove their legal status to be in the US and, at the request of the US authorities, ensure that they returned any 'borrowed' cars and stuff back to US soil.
Charles Burdaky, Manchester

***And we thought Lou Albano just made it up! That he assumed Mario was Mexican (must have been the 'tache) explains an awful lot about the Super Mario Bros Super Show.* Ed**

"Intent"

It seems like Nintendo are currently under fire from every corner these days, with the Game Boy Micro being the latest example of their own fans misunderstanding their intentions. How many times has the Game Boy been repackaged in its long and glorious history? How many times have Nintendo failed to deliver quality with each incarnation?

Regardless of its age, the DS's current catalogue of games doesn't make me moist. For the first time in gaming history, Nintendo have acquired serious competition in the handheld market. The new Micro is a statement of intent, and who can blame them? With a massive back catalogue and with more classic games being produced all the time, Nintendo would be insane not to continue the GBA. Has anyone noticed how some of the best DS games could be GBA games? *Advance Wars Dual Strike? Harvest Moon?* Nintendo seem to be drawing inspiration from gaming history, harking back to the days when a game could not be rescued by flashy graphics. And which console epitomises this more than the GBA? I feel warm inside, knowing that Nintendo will continue taking gamers to exciting new places using old technology and some damn fine gameplay. And a slightly brighter screen.
Elliott Tate, via email



CREATIVE CORNER

This month's top arts and crafts masterpieces…

"Down with"

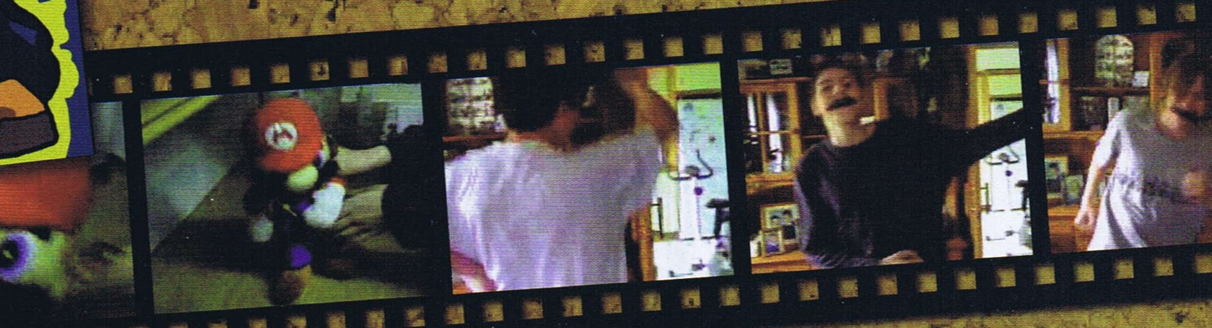
I present to you Mario getting down with the kids. I considered a pun about Magic Mushrooms, but it's all included. My next piece is Zelda and Peach in leather bondage gear.
G Sarell, via email

***I'm printing this on condition you send your next piece marked for my personal attention.* Ed**

"Beautiful"

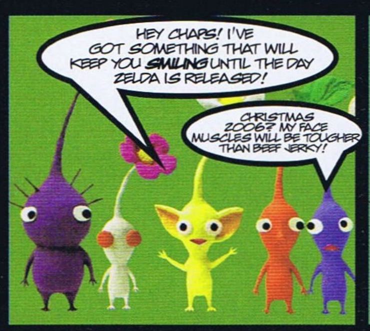
My brother Simon and two of his friends, Andrew Leighfield and Grant Mallion, have made a mini Mario movie. I found it extremely funny and other people who watched it agree with me. Hopefully you will be laughing your heads off by the end of it.
Thomas Philpot, Huntingdon

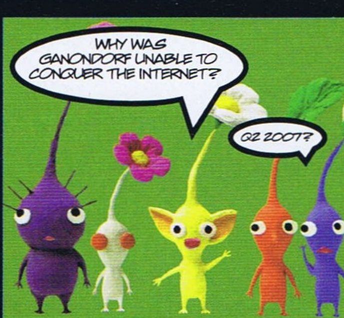
***For anyone who can't get the full impression from these stills, it goes like this: Three blokes do an embarrassing dance to Lou Albano's Do The Mario; a sequence which precedes several minutes of shaky-cam footage of the violent abuse of a Mario soft toy. Apparently there's a sequel in the works.* Ed**

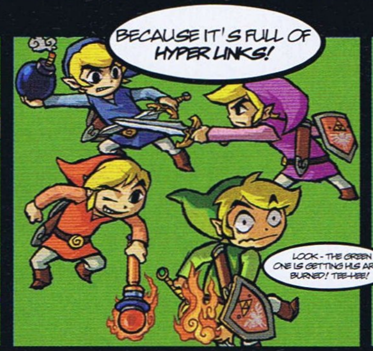


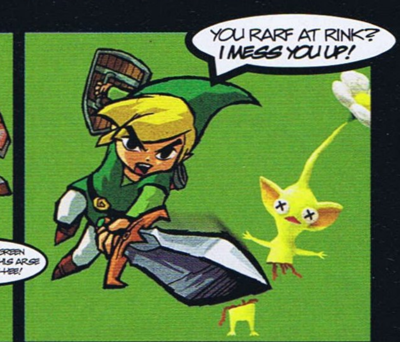
Grintendo!

SEND US YOUR NINTENDO JOKES! MAKE THEM GOOD AND YOU WIN A GAME. MAKE THEM CRAP AND THE YELLOW PIKMIN DIES. HORRIBLY. AND IT'S ALL YOUR FAULT.
THIS MONTH: JOKE SUPPLIED BY JOSIAH MAINWARING









WRITE TO... GRINTENDO, MAILBOX, NGC, 30 MONMOUTH STREET, BATH, BA1 2BW OR EMAIL NGC@FUTURENET.CO.UK

The Micro is an excellent way to breathe new life into a console that doesn't deserve to die just yet. I think the £69 price tag is a bit cheeky, but there's no denying which handheld offers the widest variety of quality gaming. They just need to re-release some of those classic games, as older GBA games can be hard to find in most shops. Ed

"Reissues"

The recently released Nintendo DS got me quite excited. I see good games slowly but surely cropping up on the horizon, which is good. I also like its originality and its potential. I didn't buy it though – and probably will not unless someone can answer my question: are there going to be (numerous) DS reissues? I remember buying my old GBA, and liking it. The only annoying things were the lack of a rechargeable battery pack and a screen light. Also, it was portable, but – let's face it – not pocket-sized. The SP came out later and I regretted not having the money left to buy one of those. Now I rarely play my old GBA because it's not portable enough – which is a shame, because the SP, even with its lack of a headphone socket, is the right size and has no need for any added peripherals to function properly.

With Game Boy Micro on the way, I now don't regret missing out on the SP. It's exactly what I was looking for in the original GBA – simple, quality gaming to take with you with more ease than a phone or even a wallet. Now back to the DS. I know it plays any GBA game – which is a major pro – but it's hardly pocket-sized; it's simply too hard to take with you wherever you go. So will Nintendo pull off another reissue that WILL be pocket-sized? Will a DS Micro crop up in a couple of years, making the old DS as useless as the old GBA seems right now? And most importantly, what exactly are the errors and niggles with the current Nintendo DS that would make them consider redesigning it?
Eelco de Vries, Netherlands

Given that they've redesigned most of their previous consoles, it seems fairly likely that the DS will get the same treatment. That's not to say that the DS isn't worth buying at the moment, because any potential redesign would be several years down the line. The only problems that I think would ever need fixing are the size of the casing and the unfriendly menus that shut down the machine when you try to exit them. Oh, and an online version of Pictochat would be lovely. Ed

"Great monotony"

I must say that I take your reviews very seriously and usually never doubt your verdicts, but I must take issue with *Harvest Moon: A Wonderful Life*. I know it's old news but I was expecting a game full of expansion, of wonderment and fun. I soon came to realise the confinement, the stupidity and, most of all, the great monotony of the game.
Brian Dwyer, via email

Maybe you should check out* Another Wonderful Life*? Just kidding. Ed



SO TELL ME THIS...

Your questions fudged by the NGC pocket calculator.

About how much will the Game Boy Micro cost?
James Evans, Walsall

It's £69, or thereabouts.

1. Is there any chance of the brilliant Custom Robo *series coming to the DS?*
2. What kind of things will there be available to download for the DS once the kiosks are opened?
Richard Ramsay, via email

1. My magic 8-ball says 'probably'.
2. If and when download kiosks become available for DS in this country, the Japanese model suggests small game demos will be the likeliest content.

1. What are the chances of a Pikmin sequel on Gamecube?
2. Will the Mario Kart *arcade game be converted to Gamecube? After all, it's based on the Triforce hardware which is basically just a GC.*
Mike Sheron, via email

1. Absolutely none.
2. While a conversion would be very easy, marketing the game would be very expensive. I'd say no, but I'd like to be proved wrong.

What advice could you give to me on an open button that keeps getting stuck down every time I press it? If I want to shut the lid, I have to slam it down. I'm afraid it may get permanently stuck so I was wondering if you could help me out. What tools do I have to use, or is there a place where I can get it fixed?
Chris Bounds, via email

That button is Gamecube's big design flaw – we've heard from so many people who have had problems with it, and a couple of our office machines need a bit of gentle jiggling before the lids will lock down.

To get it fixed the proper way, try the Nintendo Service Centre on 0870 6060247. They'll be able to tell you how much a repair will cost or, if your Gamecube is less than two years old, sort it out for free.

If you're brave enough to risk fixing it yourself, you'll need a gamebit screwdriver to open the console, and cotton buds to clean up the gunk that's probably causing the button to stick.

TIMEWARP



With Mark Green



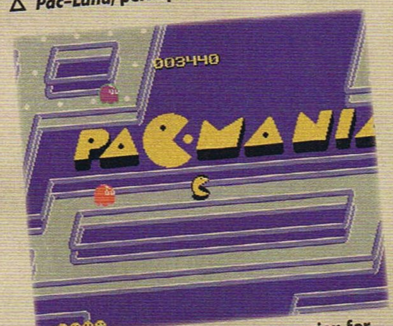
THE FAMILY TREE

The sordid history of today's bestest games

Pac-Manniversary

Pac-Man's 25 years old this month – and here are the youthful misadventures he'd probably rather forget. No such luck, Pac-Man…

△ *Pac-Land*, perhaps most notable for the ghosts' cross dressing predilections.



△ *Pacmania*, the natural progression for Pac-Man, but rubbish.

PAC-LAND (NES, 1984)
Apeing the look of the mostly forgotten '80s Pac-Man TV cartoon, this was already the eighth Pac game – but it was doing the running, jumping and scrolling thing a full year before Shigsy unveiled *Super Mario Bros*. As well as the less influential 'dressing familiar enemies in drag' thing.

PACMANIA (NES, 1991)
'Of course! *Pac-Man* twisted into 3D!' You can imagine the suits high-fiving and whooping as they mentally spent the profits from this brainwave. Then stabbing themselves with biros when the programmer, missing the point entirely, restricted the screen to a sixth of the maze at a time.

PAC IN TIME (1995, SNES)
Pac (a 'cool video game dude', according to the game) is sent back in time to 1975 by an evil witch and is conveniently transformed into an all-swinging, all-swimming, all-hammering hero who still refuses to leave a room unless he's eaten every last yellow dot he can get his mouth on.

PAC-MAN 2: THE NEW ADVENTURES (1994, SNES)
Not quite the sequel the world was expecting. Giddy with the power of the Super Nintendo, Namco dumped the mazes and built Pac-Man into a 'living cartoon' that was about as interactive as a blancmange, and appealing only for kids too young to know who this walking M&M was.

Pac basically controlled himself, trotting about Pac-Town and gurning at his surroundings like Jim Carrey in a wind tunnel. Your only role was to encourage him to actually do something by bashing things with a catapult – like dislodging an apple from a tree to make Pac-Man eat it (he'd largely given up on the pills, at least).

The problem: it was slow, boring and more of a repeating comedy routine than a game. Pac's animations as he danced to a chiming clock or was chased by crazed farmers with pitchforks were cute, funny, and brilliantly drawn – but also unavoidable, repetitive and unskippable. The yella fella was a petulant little blob, too, stopping to scream or cry at every turn, and sulkily refusing to do anything if you didn't hit the right buttons at the right time (which was most of the time).

And when exactly did Ms Pac-Man become Mrs Pac-Man? We didn't see that celeb wedding covered in Heat.

MS PAC-MAN MAZE MADNESS (2000, N64)
Pretty and playable melting pot of puzzling and maze wandering, with bouncy music that we'd still be humming if Axel F hadn't staged a coup d'état on our brains. We still don't understand how she actually attaches that bow to her head. Sellotape, probably.

Gaming Family Trees, A Definitive Guide 1005



RETRO NEWS

News rounded up from the wild world of retrogaming.



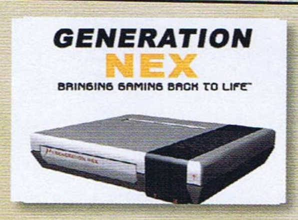
JOIN THE CLUB

There are plenty of regular retrogaming events on Planet Earth and the UK's own Classic Games Expo was held in Croydon this August. But there's something charmingly old-school about The 8-Bitters Fun Club, which recently held its inaugural meeting at the Rockin' Coffee Java House in Oakland, California, and meets to play old Nintendo games and get down to some "general NES lovin'". They even hand out membership cards which award you the status of Master, Dragon Warrior or Mega Man. Bless them, really.
■ www.oldskulnes.com



TWILIGHT SHINES

Tired of the ten year wait between proper 2D Mario games and too impatient to hang around for the *New Super Mario Bros*, internet citizens have been fashioning their own 'fangames' for years. *Super Mario Blue Twilight DX* is the best we've seen in ages: a Halloween themed adventure for Mazza that might be a bit fiddly in the controls and go a bit overboard on the gothic (flaming pumpkin-headed scarecrows, anyone?), but is a play and a half. Just don't tell Nintendo, eh?
■ http://blazefire.mooglecavern.com/sekrit/mween/

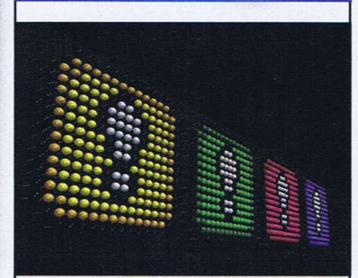


MESSIAH IS COMING

A recent interview with Messiah Entertainment – the people behind Generation NEX, a new NES-compatible console – revealed that the company's having trouble putting in the machine's 'bonus' features (such as wireless joypads). Why bother? Because Messiah reckon NEX will be a viable bit of kit for newly designed games. "Who wouldn't want to have *Contra* with better graphics, stereo sound and vibration?" said president Brad Strahle. "We're also looking at doing our own software, brand new games." Good luck!

NET TENDO

Three into two will go



Doing things like automatically extracting the colour and positional information from each pixel in the source sprite image may not sound very interesting, but look at the results that Richard Horsman gets when he does just that. Check out these lovely 3D images, giving *Super Mario World, Donkey Kong Jr* and other classic games the look of the three-dimensional space disco of our fantasies. They were created using a number of methods, including some kind of virtual Lego and simply piecing them together to form the character. In fact, you may have seen Richard's work on the cover of Edge issue 145. Just beware of the 3D balls picture of Mario – it looks like he's come out in hives or something.
■ http://www.richyho.btinternet.co.uk/

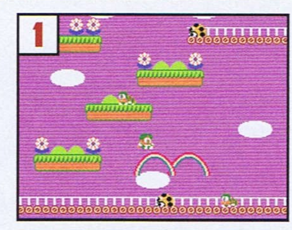
Mouse of fun



We've seen plenty of odd things done with a NES joypad – some of them illegal – but this must be the first time someone has converted one into a PC mouse. The palm-destroying right angles of Nintendo's original control brick may not seem the most ergonomic design for such a peripheral, but Ryan McFarland just kept on converting – even when he had to clean 'the mystery child's coagulated sweat' out of the second-hand controllers he bought for a total of $1.37 from the American equivalent of Oxfam.
■ http://zieak.com/projects/nintendo_mouse.htm

FIVE Things

Curious interpretations of the word 'weapon'.



1 RAINBOW

You'd better watch out, it's not a pot of gold you'll find at the end of Bub and Bob's rainbows in *Rainbow Islands*, it's a pot of dead. They're only slightly less strange than the umbrellas and bubbles that the dino/human twins have used elsewhere in different games…



2 FOOTBALL

1993's *Soccer Kid*, also known as *The Adventures of Kid Cleets* in the USA, not only had more charisma and a better face than Wayne Rooney, he was also able to use his fancy footwork to save the entire world. We'd like to see how much his contract's worth.



3 RELIGIOUS TALK

In *Exodus* (see p86), a NES game based on the story of the Israelites' plight in Egypt, Bible megastar Moses flattened sceptical nay-sayers with The Word of God – which just turned out to be the letter W, catapulted towards naughty Egyptians at high speed. Amen to that.



4 HAIR

Super Punch Out's oft-battered hero Little Mac experienced the ultimate bad hair day when he faced the somewhat camp Heike Kagero, an opponent who used his unusually powerful old lady's blue rinse haircut to knock seven bells out of him. Poor little blighter.



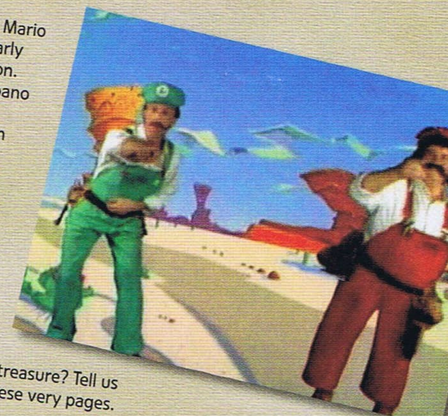
5 LEG

Battletoad's walkers didn't really have a leg to stand on, or at least they didn't after Rare's toads managed to add insult to injury by smashing them up into their constituent parts and borrowing their limbs to use as makeshift baseball bats. Bad news for them, good news for the toads.

RETRO TAT

Mazza TV show for all.

Does a TV show count as 'tat'? It certainly does when it's The Super Mario Bros Super Show, much-mocked early '80s mix of live action and animation. We interviewed SMBSS star Lou Albano in NGC/111 and now, thanks to full episodes now up on Yahoo!, you can see him in action, dancing in a way that science just can't explain. This link will take you to the episode Gorilla My Dreams, which kicks off with the line, "Luigi, have you seen my boxer shorts?" No, really.
■ http://media2.yahoo.com/player/ligans/?key=47611



WRITE IN!
Have you seen a piece of retro-related treasure? Tell us about it and we'll print your name in these very pages. Email ngc@futurenet.co.uk.



THIS MONTH IN NINTENDO

The world according to **N64 Mag, Issue 21 November 1998.**





△ *Turok 2* was notably more adult in content, with more blood and darker themes on display at all times,





△ This is a flare gun, useless for killing enemies, very good for lighting things.



GAME OF THE MONTH
TUROK 2
NINTENDO 64

One of the best first person shooters on the N64. Shame about the rest of the series…

WHAT'S THIS? Big, ballsy dinoblaster from the dear departed Acclaim, with brain-drilling weaponry wielded by Joshua 'I am Turok!' Fireseed – Native American and sworn enemy of velociraptors everywhere.

THE BIG DEAL: The original was a bloody miracle – claret everywhere, gratifyingly slick and chart success, despite a £70 price tag. The sequel broke the anticipat-o-meter.

WHAT WE THOUGHT: 'It's everything you need: blood, guts, weapons, puzzle, strategy and immense 3D worlds.' We raved over the hi-res visuals – *Turok 2* was one of the first games whose visuals were improved with the addition of the Expansion Pak.

THE OFFICIAL LINE: 'New weapons, better graphics, more Turok!!'

WHAT HAPPENED NEXT? Straight to the top of the charts, and eventual sales of well over a million – one of only a handful of non-Nintendo games to break that barrier on the N64.

AND: "I'm a nice guy. I'm the first guy in line for every Disney movie on the planet… But at the end of the day I'm the first guy to go, 'Drilling somebody's brains out is fun'" – *Turok* mastermind David Dienstbier, 1998.

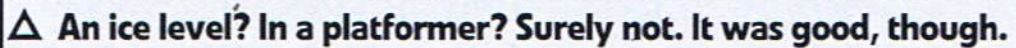


△ *Turok 2* was completely rebuilt, it wasn't just the same game with different levels.

Everyone was playing...

BANJO-KAZOOIE
NINTENDO 64




△ An ice level? In a platformer? Surely not. It was good, though.


△ Banjo was so great, one session at NGC towers lasted 16 hours.

A wise-cracking bird and a dozy bear set off to rescue their friend from a witch and make gaming history.

Something must have leaked into the air conditioning on the day Rare had the meeting to devise a name for this platforming legend. But what a game they came up with: pretty as a picture, monumentally big, and with Rare's unique sense of humour running through it like a big, sarcastic river. The two-character system was a bit of a gimmick – Banjo and Kazooie were glued together at all times – but it was a great excuse for some laugh out loud animations (the bird giving the bear a high-speed piggyback, for example), and gave *Banjo-Kazooie* infinitely more character than other platformers of the day like, say, *Gex 64*. It's a bit of a shame about the stupid rhyming witch, though. Oh well.

Other news...
Old news, tastefully repackaged

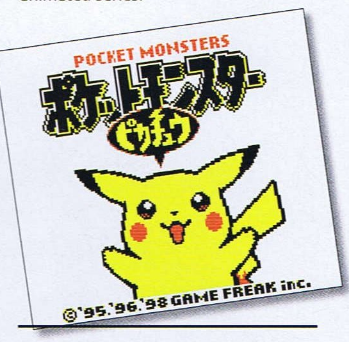


LETTERS GO

Hot topics in the letters included a threat from Sega's Dreamcast (that wasn't), why *GT 64* could claim to have 12 tracks when six were just mirrored versions of the first lot (it couldn't), and whether *Banjo-Kazooie* deleted your save game if you taunted Bottles the Mole enough (it didn't).

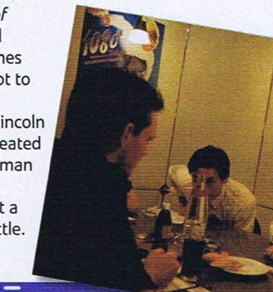
POKEMON CATCHES ON

N64 Mag's Tokyo correspondent Max Everingham reported on Pokémon's takeover of the entire universe – nine million copies of *Red* and *Green* had already been sold, and the Pikachu-soaked *Yellow* was also announced to cash in on the success of the animated series.



SHIGSY HOUSEBOUND

Shigsy was expected at Europe's biggest games trade show – the now-defunct ECTS – but was ordered to stay at home to finish the endlessly delayed *Zelda: Ocarina of Time*. N64 editor James Ashton got to interview Howard Lincoln instead, seated next to a man staring intently at a water bottle.





OTHER REVIEWS THIS MONTH

Glover
Inventive platformer starring a glove, a ball and lots of big green sharks with hats.
83%

Gex 64
Possibly the most odious and irritating videogame star ever created. And one of the worst games.
59%

1080° Snowboarding
Spectacular predecessor to *White Storm*, which we all found very, very hard indeed.
89%

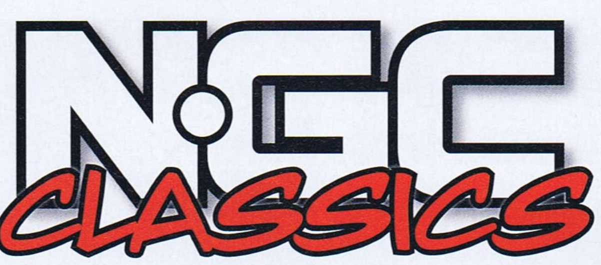
Worst game...

TRUMP WORLD
NINTENDO 64





One of the most immediately dispiriting games on the Nintendo 64, *Trump World* reduced Lewis Carroll's classic tale of Alice in Wonderland to a series of card games – leading to bizarre moments like playing poker against a dormouse, a chair and a set of double doors. The cart's collection of games included subgames seemingly found on the street and bunged in regardless. You'd be experiencing cartoon, pop up book-style gin rummy one minute, then suddenly be plunged into a haunting game of Solitaire against a photo-quality midnight forest backdrop the next.



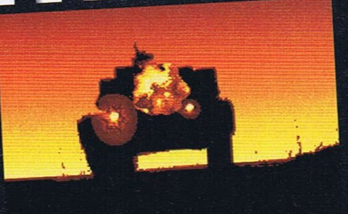
Bring back the memories – or fill in the brainholes with new ones.

CLASSIC BOXART
SNAKE'S REVENGE : NES (1990)

Metal Gear mastermind Hideo Kojima would probably punch you in the gut if you so much as mentioned *Snake's Revenge* – the more-or-less unofficial sequel to the original *Metal Gear Solid* on the NES that Nintendo trotted out to satisfy demand. It's more shooty and less stealthy than its predecessor, and the boxart matches its quality: Snake has more gun than any man should, and is carrying as much kit as your average plumber. The lady's a beauty, too: her bod is squeezed into her t-shirt like Play-Doh crammed into its pot.

CLASSIC CUTSCENE
SUPER BATTLETANK: SNES (1988)

Subtitled 'War In The Gulf', this tank sim has two cutscenes of note. The first is some impressive digitised footage of a tank. The second is the not so impressive briefing that precedes each mission. There's something very, very wrong with Fox, your commander. His head appears to be on some kind of timer mechanism that rocks it back and forth at high speed.







CLASSIC COCK-UP
ZELDA: A LINK TO THE PAST: SNES (1991)

This one's actually a deliberate secret, but oddly it only appears when *A Link to the Past's* code cocks up, making it one of the Zelda series' secretest easter eggs. The Houlihan room is chock-a-block with gems, and is used as a kind of cover-up room if the game goes screwy during play. And who's Chris Houlihan? He won a competition in Nintendo's US magazine to have his name in a secret room in *Link to the Past*. Lucky beggar.

My name is Chris Houlihan.
This is my top secret room.
Keep it between us, OK?

△ Behold the wonders of the Houlihan room…

CAREER GRAPH: Shy Guy
The man behind the mask – all the time.

CAREER GRAPH • CAREER GRAPH • CAREER GRAPH • CAREER GRAPH • CAREER GRAPH • CAREER GRAPH • CAREER GRAPH • CAREER GRAPH • CAREER GRAPH

+5 +4 +3 +2 +1 0 -1 -2 -3 -4 -5

Doki Doki Panic (1987): Brainless as well as eyeless in the game that became *Mario Bros 2.*

Super Mario Bros 2 (1987): Welcomed into the Mario universe proper. Then killed a lot.

Yoshi's Island (1995): Disguised themselves as flowers and walked on stilts. So cute.

Super Mario RPG (1996): Given the size, it's clear what the mouth hole is for: dinner.

Game & Watch Gallery 2 (1997): Still hungry, with a hankering for Yoshi's young. The horror…

Yoshi's Story (1997): Look, now they're riding submarines and wearing earmuffs. Ahh, bless.

Mario Party (1998): Shy Guy minigame: raises flag, lowers flag. Demeaning.

Mario Tennis (2000): First playable role – turns out they aren't so shy on the court.

Paper Mario (2000): Get their own level (Shy Guy's Toy Box). They have arrived.

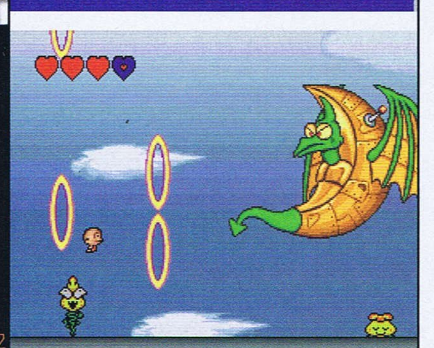
Mario Party 3 (2000): Nick all your coins, like the greedy little blankets they are.

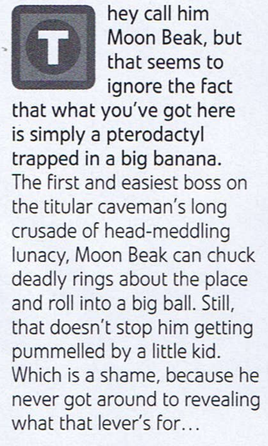
Luigi's Mansion (2001): True form revealed – silhouettes with eyes. We want our mum.

CAREER GRAPH • CAREER GRAPH • CAREER GRAPH • CAREER GRAPH • CAREER GRAPH • CAREER GRAPH • CAREER GRAPH • CAREER GRAPH • CAREER GRAPH









They call him Moon Beak, but that seems to ignore the fact that what you've got here is simply a pterodactyl trapped in a big banana. The first and easiest boss on the titular caveman's long crusade of head-meddling lunacy, Moon Beak can chuck deadly rings about the place and roll into a big ball. Still, that doesn't stop him getting pummelled by a little kid. Which is a shame, because he never got around to revealing what that lever's for…



△ *Castlevania IV's* spinny bits had our jaws on the floor back in the day.

SCORE 000046930 PLAYER ENEMY BLOCK 4-2 ♥=35 P=03 TIME 398

CLASSIC LEVEL

SUPER CASTLEVANIA IV
SUPER NINTENDO

Although it was ostensibly a remake of the very first *Castlevania* game, this SNES beaut made absolutely fantastic use of the Super Nintendo's special features to create what most Belmont aficionados reckon is probably one of the greatest *Castlevania* games ever.

It doesn't get much better than Level 3. Having coasted through a couple of levels that never really rise above pedestrian, skeleton-whipping action, you encounter a body oddly slumped against some wall spikes. If you're left wondering how that happened, you're in luck – it doesn't take long for you to find out. Showing off the Super Nintendo's spinny effects specialism (an absolute jaw-dropper in its day), the whole room starts rotating on its axis, leaving you frantically trying to attach your whip to the hook at the centre of the screen.

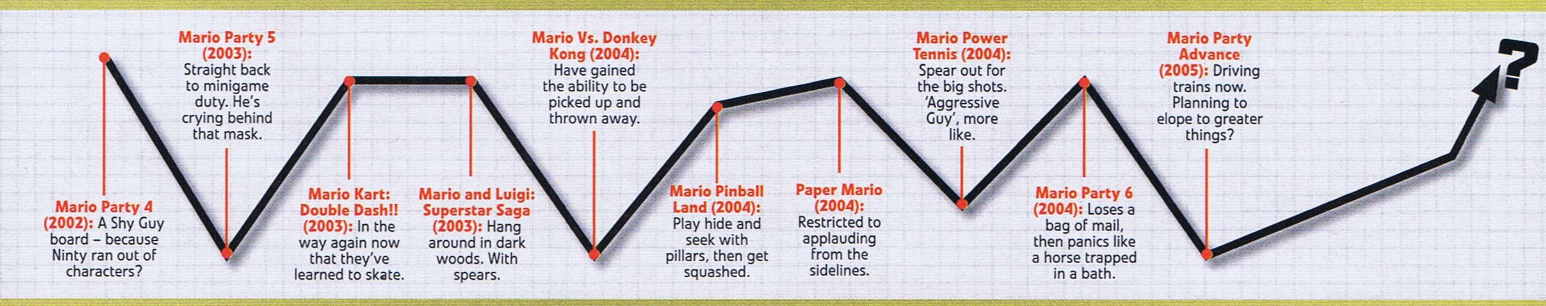
Konami weren't completely done with the showing off, though. The next room, a seemingly simple left-to-right exercise in skellington-slapping, is made much more interesting – and infinitely more stomach turning – by giving you the impression that you're walking through a giant, spinning 3D barrel. It made us feel quite ill.

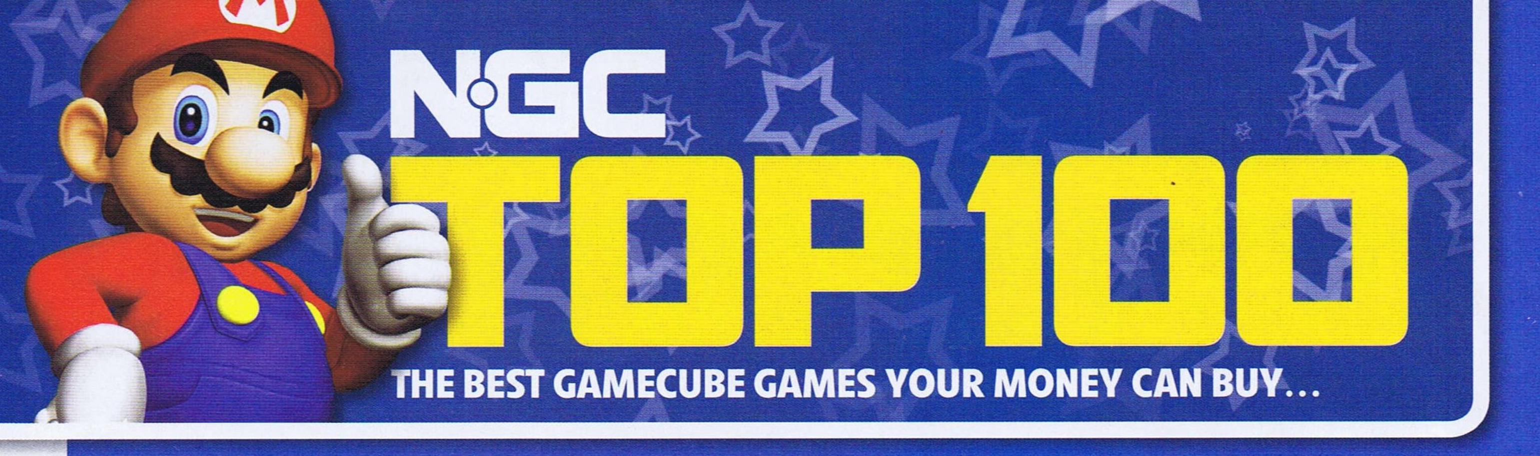
If you are lucky enough to get through that, you'll walk slap into a boss who, like some bricky enemies you met earlier on in the game, gradually shrinks down to nothingness as you whip away at him. Brilliant stuff.



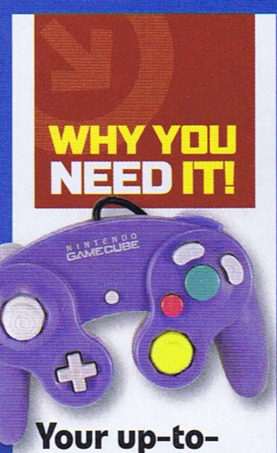
LOST CLASSIC
RADARSCOPE: ARCADE (1980)

One of the first games Nintendo built for the arcades, Radarscope was a sort of 3D version of smash hit alien shooter *Galaxian* – 'sort of' because it was only a slight twisting of the gamescape that gave it the impression of depth, which meant you simply had a lot of very small aliens, floating a long way away to try and hit. Nintendo boss Hiroshi Yamauchi thought it would be a massive hit; in the end it flopped, and Mr Y asked a relatively new Nintendo employee to build a game that would run on the Radarscope hardware. The designer: Shigeru Miyamoto. The game he came up with: *Donkey Kong*.





WHY YOU NEED IT!



Your up-to-date guide to the hottest PAL titles.

Games aren't cheap. Even when you buy pre-owned games, it's still a bit gutting to get your bargain treasure home and find you've splashed out on a box of gaming garbage. Hence this buyer's guide – it's got:

- **The 100 top-scoring games, listed in score order so you can begin with the very best.**
- **We tell you which issue it was reviewed in, so if you want to know more you can look through your back issues. You *do* have them, don't you…?**
- **A brief description of the game, so if you don't have that issue you can find out the most important points about it.**
- **Highlighted games, with a little more detail. As games join the list, the highlights will change!**

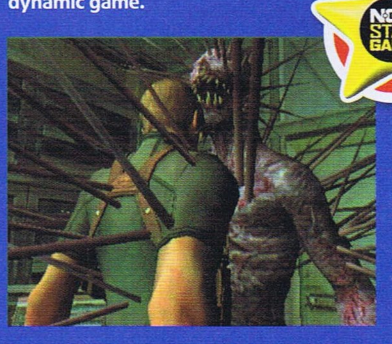


1 RESIDENT EVIL 4 — 97

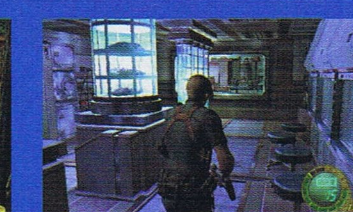
CAPCOM ■ NGC/104

What, no zombies? What's going on? Something spectacular, that's what. This instalment takes the *Resi* series to the next level, with an unprecedented level of innovation. Gone are the three-day-long animations of doors opening and in comes this new, far more dynamic game.

NGC STAR GAME









2 THE LEGEND OF ZELDA THE WIND WAKER — 97

NINTENDO ■ NGC/81

The babbling of the internet whingers faded to a stunned silence when this hit the shelves. It's as exquisitely fashioned as a Disney feature film and doesn't lose any of the gameplay for it. Some sailing sections spoil it a bit, but this is as close to art as games have got.

NGC STAR GAME







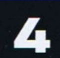
3 METROID PRIME — 97

NINTENDO ■ NGC/76

Looks absolutely incredible and there's no slow down, despite the huge, incredibly detailed environments. The action is varied and the puzzles are mind-bending. One of the finest games you'll ever play.

NGC STAR GAME





4 SUPER MARIO SUNSHINE

96

NINTENDO ■ NGC/73

Yet again Mario shows other platform 'heroes' how it's really done – in stunning 3D, with responsive controls and an engaging story (about vandalism and poisonous brown slime). Plus a giant water-filled squirty backpack. You need one of those… *(who writes this nonsense? Ed)*





5 METROID PRIME 2: ECHOES

94

NINTENDO ■ NGC/101

Another outstanding outing for Samus Aran as she switches between dimensions to save the Luminoth from the Ing. The story is enriched by the logs you find, and Samus has useful new weapons and abilities. The landscapes aren't as varied and awe-inspiring as *Prime's*, but that's our only complaint.





6 MARIO KART DOUBLE DASH!!

93

NINTENDO ■ NGC/88

Crazy courses littered with Chain Chomps and pick-up boxes, weapons from slippy bananas to green shells, giant Yoshi eggs, and all your favourite Ninty faces doubling up to race recklessly. The AI's a bit cheaty (a shell *just* as we're about to win? Hmm…) but it's a whole lot of fun.





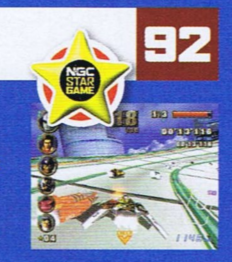


7 F-ZERO GX

92

NINTENDO ■ NGC/85

This is a blisteringly fast racer that manages to keep up the pace without getting framerate jitters. You will never accept glitchy graphics again. A few more tracks would have been nice, but with editable vehicles (in addition to the 30+ that come with the game) and a Story mode, why complain?



8 PIKMIN 2

92

NINTENDO ■ NGC/99

Louie, Olimar's assistant, has proved less than efficient at managing the business. Happily, it means they've had to return to Earth for a longer session of collecting treasure. They've got two new types of Pikmin to help them out, too. Bigger, better and even more enjoyable than the original.







9 SOUL CALIBUR 2

91

NAMCO ■ NGC/85

Excellent, fast-paced fighting. Weapon Master mode is your key to unlocking the eight hidden characters, but the real star of the show isn't hidden. Namco have dropped in Link for the Gamecube version, complete with bow and arrow. It's the best fighting game on *any* system.



10 TIMESPLITTERS 2

91

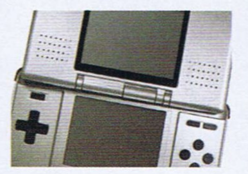
EIDOS ■ NGC/73

Travel back through time on the trail of the nefarious 'splitters. This means shooting things. Your weapons are time-zone appropriate, you'll wage war everywhere from the Wild West to the near future and you will love every minute. The multiplayer is the icing on the cake.





TOP TEN GBA GAMES





1 ADVANCE WARS 1 & 2

Cute-looking turn-based strategy with a frighteningly addictive, super-challenging core. Honestly, it's better than it sounds. *AW2* is essentially *Advance Wars 1.5*, but it's tweaked to perfection.

2 WARIO WARE TWISTED!

Takes the template laid down by *Wario Ware*, then adds a tilt-sensitive cartridge. You'll play it until you're sick.

3 WARIO WARE

Imagine the simple graphics and gameplay of Game & Watch fired at you in five-second bursts. Loopy fun that you'll keep returning to.



4 MARIO & LUIGI SUPERSTAR SAGA

An RPG with puzzle and platform elements, starring our two top plumbers.



5 THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: A LINK TO THE PAST

One of the most memorable outings for Link (alongside *Ocarina of Time*). Comes with bonus *Four Swords* multiplayer adventure.



6 SUPER MARIO ADVANCE 2

This tweaked version of the SNES classic boasts a massive game world and some of the tightest level design ever.



7 POKÉMON RUBY & SAPPHIRE

The same structure as before – catch 'em all, send 'em into battle – but still the most entertaining RPG out there…



8 MARIO KART SUPER CIRCUIT

Nicks the best bits from the SNES and N64 versions, and if you've got four friends, GBAs and cables, they can play too.



9 METROID FUSION/ ZERO MISSION

Everything that has ever made *Metroid* great can be found in these two games. A sprawling environment littered with enemies and an imposing difficulty level.



10 HARVEST MOON

A slow burner, *HM: Friends of Mineral Town* is a farming/charming sim to die for. It will last you for months.

DIRECTORY
The best Gamecube games around

11 SUPER SMASH BROS MELEE 91
NINTENDO ■ NGC/68
All your Nintendo favourites get together for a phenomenal ruck across a whole range of game worlds. Think Samus could beat Mario? Or that three Jigglypuffs are better than one Link? You'll have massive amounts of fun proving it, by yourself or with friends.



12 HARVEST MOON A WONDERFUL LIFE 91
UBISOFT ■ NGC/91
Romance the ladies, keep cows and grow veggies as the seasons change. Despite a new chapter structure, this farm sim loses its way a little when you've got your bride and has few new goals apart from hybridising crops, but you'll keep returning to do a bit of milking…

13 HITMAN 2 SILENT ASSASSIN 91
EIDOS ■ NGC/82
Bald, barcoded assassin 47 comes out of retirement and takes on the bad guys with a range of weapons. Not bad for a bloke who spends his time in a shed. You're rewarded for doing things quietly, but how you go about it is up to you. This is freeform gaming at its finest.

14 MARIO POWER TENNIS 91
NINTENDO ■ NGC/104
If you stick with it and learn the ins and outs of the power shots, you're left with an incredibly tactical game. It levels the field, making it a game where the most seasoned veteran can take on the most casual gamer and still have a closely fought match.

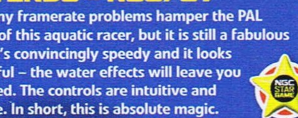
15 PRINCE OF PERSIA THE SANDS OF TIME 91
UBISOFT ■ NGC/90
Ubisoft show other developers how to update classic games without ruining them, as the brilliant 2D platformer gets transformed into an outstanding 3D platformer. Maybe there's too much fighting, and maybe the puzzles are too samey, but it all reeks of quality.



16 PAPER MARIO: THE THOUSAND-YEAR DOOR 91
NINTENDO ■ NGC/100
With Mario's papery ability to fold himself into a paper plane or turn sideways to become high-invisible, plus a great fighting mechanism and rippable scenery, this is a brilliant example of Nintendo doing what they do best – making the games only they can make.



17 WAVE RACE BLUE STORM 90
NINTENDO ■ NGC/67
A few tiny framerate problems hamper the PAL version of this aquatic racer, but it is still a fabulous game. It's convincingly speedy and it looks wonderful – the water effects will leave you staggered. The controls are intuitive and effective. In short, this is absolute magic.





18 VIEWTIFUL JOE 90
CAPCOM ■ NGC/84
Some people love the unusual looks, some people hate them. Either way, get past the cel-shading and this 2D-yet-3D beat-'em-up impresses. Elements like speeding up and slowing down time during battles only adds to the feel. It can be frustrating, but you'll love it anyway.

19 SECOND SIGHT 90
CODEMASTERS ■ NGC/97
Excellent psychic stealth-'em-up. Who are you? Why are you here? All will be revealed – if you survive. The levels are tightly designed, offering scope for replay, while its distinctive style and original touches make it one of the most memorable games we've played in years.

20 METAL GEAR SOLID THE TWIN SNAKES 90
KONAMI ■ NGC/91
This is a superb stealth/action adventure with a healthy pedigree. A great story combined with revamped graphics make this old Playstation title blossom on Gamecube. The voice acting and music are superb. There are some problems: the long cutscenes, it only takes a day to complete and there are too many bosses. We're just picky, though, this is a really, really good game.

21 BURNOUT 2 90
ACCLAIM ■ NGC/80
The best realistic racer on Gamecube. It looks great and it's wonderfully fast. Then there are the crashes… When you've had fun roaring around the streets, you can beat up your car in the most spectacular manner possible. Accessible and entertaining.



22 WARIO WARE INC. MEGA PARTY GAME$ 90
NINTENDO ■ NGC/97
A quickfire succession of hilarious five-second minigames are blasted at you and up to three friends. With tasks like nose picking, cat poking and banana peeling, it's original, outlandishly quirky and very good fun. This comes thoroughly recommended.

23 PHANTASY STAR ONLINE I & 2 90
SEGA ■ NGC/78
This online RPG will devour huge chunks of your life. Get ready for lots of menu screens, numbers and bashing crates. Note: 1) you'll need a broadband adaptor to play online – good luck finding one. 2) Third-party memory cards are prone to corrupt with this.



24 1080° AVALANCHE 90
NINTENDO ■ NGC/89
More of a racer than a trick-based snowboarder, although jumps, spins and flips are all there. Short courses and a fair bit of pace keep things feeling tight. The time trial modes are the best bits – Gate Trial will have you trying to shave seconds off for months.

TOP FIVE PLATFORM GAMES

SUPER MARIO SUNSHINE
This is a tour-de-force of everything that good gaming should be. An absolute delight.

PRINCE OF PERSIA THE SANDS OF TIME
An innovative time-rewinding twist and excellent puzzles make this essential.

PRINCE OF PERSIA WARRIOR WITHIN
Good looking with trickier puzzles and, ahem, more 'mature' content.

LUIGI'S MANSION
Luigi buys a mansion and finds it's haunted. It's a little easy, but you'll enjoy every second.

DONKEY KONG JUNGLE BEAT
Sheer bongos-for-D-pad brilliance.

TOP FIVE RACING GAMES



MARIO KART DOUBLE DASH!!
Single-player mode looks as cute as ever, but it's rock hard.

F-ZERO GX
Expertly crafted arcade fun. Really rockets along.

WAVE RACE BLUE STORM
Classic Nintendo action with dazzling water effects.

BURNOUT 2
Fast car racing combined with steel-crunching pile-ups.

EXTREME G 3
The weapons are what make this future racer shine.

25 NBA STREET V3 90
EA ■ NGC/104
Think *Space Jam* meets *NBA Jam* meets EA's *NBA Street* and you're pretty much there. For the Gamecube incarnation, EA heaped in a load of Nintendo characters. This is entertaining arcade basketball with all the quirks of Nintendo. What else do you need?

26 ANIMAL CROSSING 90
NINTENDO ■ NGC/98
Ever fancied leaving home and living in a town populated by animals? The full cartoon farming experience can now be yours, complete with N64 graphics and strange noises. Somehow, improving your house, filling the museum and getting a life prove very addictive.



27 SKIES OF ARCADIA LEGENDS 90
SEGA ■ NGC/81
Vast boat-based RPG ported from the Dreamcast. "It'll change your life" our RPG fanatic assures us. The spaces in between the meat of your quest for some missing moonstones are stuffed with the usual RPG battling, puzzle solving and shopping, although it looks dated now.

28 CONFLICT DESERT STORM 2 90
SCI ■ NGC/86
Set during the first Gulf War, this team-based shooter is better than the original *Conflict Desert Storm*. There's a completely new aspect to this one – you're not allowed to let any of your men die, which leads to all sorts of heroics when you try to save your team.



29 WORMS 3D 90
SEGA ■ NGC/87
You know the score. You have four worms. Your worms must kill other worms. The special weapons are as crazy as ever (Sheep, the Holy Hand Grenade…), but the only real difference is that it's now in 3D, which will affect your strategies for the better.



30 ETERNAL DARKNESS 89
NINTENDO ■ NGC/74
A Lovecraftian horror that sees you playing as a dozen different characters to fight off a dark, shambling evil. As you see more, your sanity meter falls, and when that drops to the bottom… This is a survival horror that spans twenty centuries of history. It's not another *Resi* clone; there's more to it than that. There are a few weaknesses in the combat, but other than that it's very nearly perfect.

31 LEGEND OF ZELDA FOUR SWORDS 89
NINTENDO ■ NGC/102
This is an obscure *Zelda* game that's pretty hard on the pockets – in multiplayer mode, each of the four players needs a GBA and link cable. Nonetheless, it's great fun, very amusing and would have scored more highly if the best bit of the Japanese version – Tetra's Trackers – had been included.

32 RESIDENT EVIL 89

CAPCOM ■ NGC/72

Compelling survival horror. Play as Jill if you want to take things gently, Chris if you're feeling hardcore. Then immerse yourself in this puzzle-solving, zombie-battling frightfest. There's a bit of backtracking and the puzzles are annoying, but they don't hamper it too much.

33 SPLINTER CELL 89

UBISOFT ■ NGC/81

Only Sam Fisher and his various high-tech gadgets – like sticky bombs and camera disruptors – stand between terrorists and the Free World. The 'three alarms and you're out' rule can become annoying. It's the usual stealth-'em-up stuff, but done with a fair degree of flair and polish.

34 CONFLICT DESERT STORM 89

SCI ■ NGC/80

This is a rare breed: a multi-platform release that is about as far from the 'lazy port' title as you could possibly hope. This version has been fully optimised for the Gamecube. *Conflict Desert Storm* is great fun and intensely tactical. The multiplayer is absolutely great fun as well.

35 SSX 3 89

EA ■ NGC/87

Snowboard around one giant mountain, entering races or showing off tricks. Complete all three peaks and you'll get the chance to spend 15-30 minutes tricking your way down the whole mountain. The framerate can be glitchy, and it's not quite as free-roaming as it seems at first, but it's a superb game.

36 DONKEY KONGA 88

NINTENDO ■ NGC/99

Drum along to a soundtrack, following the symbols on-screen for left bongo, right bongo, both bongos or clap. It's the sort of game that almost anyone can pick up and play. It's also completely addictive and tremendous fun. Despite the extra bongos costing £20 a set, the multiplayer is worth the expense.

37 PRINCE OF PERSIA WARRIOR WITHIN 88

UBISOFT ■ NGC/102

The Prince is older and his game's got more 'mature' (so, scantily-clad ladies and smart-arsed comments have been dropped in). It's still great to look at and great to play, with trickier puzzles than the first game, and although the fighting is a bit dodgy, the rest of it more than outweighs that problem.

38 TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2005 88

EA ■ NGC/98

This is a big game. There are probably lost tribes in there if you play for long enough, but you won't see them if you have other interests, like a job or a social life. More ball control, famous opponents, the ability to create your own golfer, 14 courses (11 of them new)… You can't get bigger or better than this.

39 LUIGI'S MANSION 88

NINTENDO ■ NGC/67

The most annoying thing about Luigi's own adventure is that it's TOO SHORT. Apart from that, his escapades in his newly-acquired haunted house play like a combination of *Super Mario World* and Ghostbusters. The man in the green hat has done himself proud with this one.

40 SUPER MONKEY BALL 88

SEGA ■ NGC/67

The first ingenious update of the old classic *Marble Madness*, with encapsulated monkeys rolling around bizarre landscapes, collecting bananas. Minigames include obvious ball games like pool and golf, oddities like a tilting boxing ring and even a monkey version of *Mario Kart*.

TOP FIVE FIGHTING GAMES

SOUL CALIBUR 2
Gorgeous Link-fuelled beat-'em-up from Namco.

SUPER SMASH BROS MELEE
All your favourite Ninty types, pounding each other's faces in: just what we've always wanted!

VIEWTIFUL JOE
Absolutely spectacular 2D-yet-not-2D side-scrolling single player fighter.

DEF JAM VENDETTA
The wrestling game that appeals to non-grapple fans as well.

VIEWTIFUL JOE 2
There's more of the same inventive gameplay, but there are no substantial changes to the successful formula.

TOP FIVE SHOOTING GAMES

METROID PRIME
Tough as nails shooting-heavy sci-fi adventure.

METROID PRIME 2 ECHOES
Samus Aran takes on the deadly Ing in this solid sequel.

TIMESPLITTERS 2
Classy first-person shooting from the *GoldenEye* boys.

TIMESPLITTERS FUTURE PERFECT
A great update, though not the revolution that was promised.

STAR WARS ROGUE LEADER
Looks great and the ropy on-foot sections of the sequel are no more.

41 TIMESPLITTERS FUTURE PERFECT 88

EA ■ NGC/105

This wasn't the revolution that was promised, instead it was just given a bit of a spring clean and a rethink. However, the multiplayer's still explosively good fun, the trademark humour is in place, it's packed with juicy extras and the Story mode is now a lot more cohesive as a single-player game.

42 NBA STREET V2 88

EA ■ NGC/84

This is basketball fitted with EA's successful *Street* template. You simply don't need a serious basketball sim in your collection – this one is stacks of fun, and unless those real-life stats really are absolutely vital to your enjoyment of a game, *NBA Street* has got everything you need. Three-on-three action, stunt combos and special moves – all this is crammed into an incredibly fun, fast-moving game.

43 DONKEY KONGA 2 88

NINTENDO ■ NGC/108

A second chance to wind up in casualty with tendonitis. The songs may be cover versions, the menus may be pretty poor and there aren't enough minigames, but this is more of the same bongo and beats action that we all loved the first time around. Just don't play Solo mode in a crowded room: you'll look like a moron.

44 DONKEY KONG JUNGLE BEAT 87

NINTENDO ■ NGC/103

Get the bongos out, it's time to change your gaming habits. Gone are the days of using the D-pad for platformers. Who needs them when you've got bongos? This sounds confusing, but it all makes perfect sense in practice. You'll need a Radox bath to soothe your aching arm muscles by the end of it.

45 MADDEN NFL 2005 87

EA ■ NGC/99

The main change to this instalment is the inclusion of the hit stick, which lets you decide how much physical impact your tackles have. Apart from that and a few tweaks to defensive plays and franchise mode, it's pretty much business as usual, with all the usual stats and player updates you'd expect.

46 DEF JAM VENDETTA 87

EA ■ NGC/82

All your favourite rappers get together to give wrestling games a kick up the booty. Start as a mere rookie and fight your way through the likes of DMX, Redman and Ludacris, then you'll have the pick of the ladies – although their blokes won't be too happy… Need we mention the great hip-hop soundtrack?

47 TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 3 87

ACTIVISION ■ NGC/67

Absolutely stinks of PS2 – go on, smell it! – but it's such good fun that it doesn't really matter. You'll find masses of grinds, stunts and a huge range of locations. Come on, this is Tony Hawk – before he got in with Bam Margera and started clowning around in cars. You know exactly what this is like…

48 LOST KINGDOMS 2 87

ACTIVISION ■ NGC/81

Although nowhere near as good as *Zelda* and *PSO*, *Lost Kingdoms 2* is a beautiful looking card-based RPG – statophiles are going to love building up their decks, collecting new cards to add to it and crunching numbers. It's nicely broken up into a series of small and easily digestible pieces.

49 STAR WARS ROGUE LEADER 87

LUCASARTS ■ NGC/68

Without a doubt the best *Star Wars* game on Gamecube, both in the way it looks and the way it plays. Take part in the battle of Hoth and whizz your ship down the trench to destroy the Death Star. Note: the whole thing has since been included as a two-player co-op game in *Rogue Squadron III*.

50 VIEWTIFUL JOE 2 87

CAPCOM ■ NGC/105

The original *Viewtiful Joe* wowed us all with its original mixture of 2D and 3D fighting. This instalment is more of the same in terms of gameplay, but there have been some slight tweaks, like the inclusion of Sylvia, a new playable character whose different FX powers alter the style of the puzzles.

51 BEYOND GOOD AND EVIL 86

UBISOFT ■ NGC/90

Wonderful looking action adventure with you finding rare animals and tackling an alien invasion. The visuals are stunning and the speech and effects make the grade, too; even the minigames are fun. The world is huge and detailed, but it is slightly easy and it won't last as long as you'd like.

52 FINAL FANTASY CRYSTAL CHRONICLES 86

SQUARE ■ NGC/91

Multiplayer RPG for up to four players, but each one will need a GBA and link cable, making this expensive if you're to play it properly. The order in which you pick up spells can be a bit random and the players' shared air bubble can be claustrophobic, but all in all this is good looking and ambitious.

53 WARIO WORLD 86

NINTENDO ■ NGC/83

Punching, pounding, portly fun. That's fun with a capital F (and U and N). The meths-swilling anti-Mario gets his very own game, and it's every bit as mad as you'd expect. Gather garlic to boost your strength and embark on a (too short) escapade that combines platforming and fighting. Wah-hah-haaaa!

54 BURNOUT 86

ACCLAIM ■ NGC/67

This was an absolutely killer racer in its day, but it was massively improved upon by its sequel. Despite the spectacular crashes, inch-perfect handling and smooth framerate, we'd still recommend you buy *Burnout 2*, because it's got all that and so much more. Not that you'd be unhappy with this, far from it!

55 BILLY HATCHER AND THE GIANT EGG 86

SEGA ■ NGC/87

Bright and bouncy, you'll have the 'la-la-la' theme tune stuck in your head for days after playing this bizarre, very Japanese platformer. Were it not for the annoyingly glitchy later levels and the poor camera, this would be a classic. Who'd have thought rolling an egg around could be so much fun?

56 PIKMIN 86

NINTENDO ■ NGC/80

Only Shigsy could have come up with a real-time strategy game set in a garden. Olimar's first visit to Earth is a resource-management revelation. You have 100 Pikmin to carry out your commands as you try to rebuild your ship before you run out of air. It looks as wonderful as it plays, but it's just too short.

DIRECTORY

The best Gamecube games around

57 XIII 86

UBISOFT ■ NGC/88

Unusual graphics, cel-shaded characters and scenes, plus comic-style effects (sequences of images, guns that literally go 'bam'…) set this FPS apart from the gun-toting crowd. Your sixth sense and a bit of stealth help to vary the pace, and when that's all over there's a great multiplayer mode.

58 NFL 2K3 86

SEGA ■ NGC/79

Possibly not as much fun as *Madden*, owing to the amount of work you have to put in to get your 11 bruisers playing together effectively. However, the enormous franchise mode and great sound and graphics make this a decent enough game of American football, if a tad out-of-date.

59 THE LORD OF THE RINGS RETURN OF THE KING 86

EA ■ NGC/87

Orc-slashing, goblin-gutting goodness featuring your favourite film fellowship. With more playable characters than *The Two Towers* (notably, Gandalf is now in the mix), this decent hack 'n' slash takes you from Helm's Deep through to the defeat of Sauron at the Crack of Doom.

60 NBA LIVE 2004 86

EA ■ NGC/88

Underneath the polished EA Sports surface lies the expected, impressively deep layer of substance. The licensed music and players are supported by a strong bedrock of stats, facts and character creation tools. Overall control has been improved and you've got more offensive options. It's soulless but slick.

61 RESIDENT EVIL ZERO 85

CAPCOM ■ NGC/78

Controlling two characters (Rebecca and Billy), you shoot your way through the usual hordes of zombies and monsters, solving puzzles to progress. Great cutscenes and in-game visuals mean this looks a treat, and it's got bags of the old *Resi* atmosphere (a coppery, bloody, fear-filled atmosphere…).

62 MARIO GOLF TOADSTOOL TOUR 85

NINTENDO ■ NGC/95

For a *Mario* game there's a surprising lack of Ninty-ness in many of the courses – it's just not as wacky as we'd like. And there's plenty of room for sensible in, say, *Tiger Woods*. That aside, it's easy to pick up the controls and the graphics are crisp and shiny. Plenty of modes and unlockables add longevity.

63 IKARUGA 85

ATARI ■ NGC/80

Its toughness is the stuff of legend, even on the easy difficulty. Your little spaceship fires white and black projectiles and you have to shoot the black and white nasties with their opposite colour. There are only five of the well-designed levels, but it will take you a while to see them all.

64 FIFA 2004 85

EA ■ NGC/87

The healthy rivalry between *FIFA* and *Pro Evo* continues. This is the best football sim on Gamecube (unless you import *Winning Eleven* from Japan), with around 400 licensed, face-scanned players, teams and stadia. The free kick system's been tweaked, and the corner kicks are now menu-driven. It's all here.

65 EXTREME G 3 85

ACCLAIM ■ NGC/67

This is an underrated gem. It's very fast, the tracks are huge, sprawling and well-designed, and you'll find some very cunning uses for the inventive weapons. The only downside to it is that it's a bit soulless and the multiplayer mode is nowhere near as good as it could have been.

66 SPLINTER CELL CHAOS THEORY 85

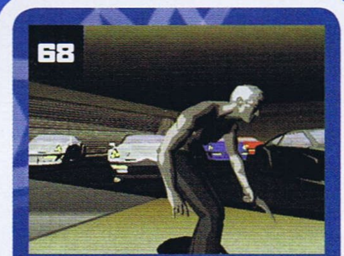
UBISOFT ■ NGC/106

This was the game that was supposed to give the *Splinter Cell* series a kick up the arse; unfortunately that didn't happen. What did happen was a thorough spring cleaning – the levels are no longer linear, for example – and as a result it feels much fresher. The addition of a co-op mode is also very welcome.

67 SPIDER-MAN 2 84

ACTIVISION ■ NGC/96

How long have we been waiting for a game that actually makes us feel like a superhero? Well, it's here! Freely swinging through an enormous city, you'll actually feel the joy of doing whatever a spider can. It's not detailed and some of the quests and missions get a bit samey, but still… that swinging!



68 KILLER 7 84

CAPCOM ■ NGC/109

Capcom's highly original, inventive and downright weird adventure is certainly interesting. You play Harman, the man with a squad of deadly assassins inside his head. You can choose between seven of his different personalities – each with their own specific abilities – in your quest to defeat the evil 'terrorists' (well, weird invisible blob-monsters), the Heaven's Smiles. So weird you *have* to try it.

69 JUDGE DREDD DREDD VS DEATH 84

VIVENDI ■ NGC/89

Dredd Vs Death sees the famous Mega City One come to life. Sadly, it's not an especially *long* life. While it lasts you get to play as ol' chinny himself: solving crimes, nailing perps and eventually tracking down the Dark Judges. The setting and story are spot-on and the fiddly controls are the only let-down.

70 POKÉMON COLOSSEUM 84

NINTENDO ■ NGC/93

The Pokémon series gains an RPG! Your task is to save the Shadow Pokémon from Darkness and destroy the powers of the people corrupting the poor critters. There's an awful lot of fighting here and you'll need a GBA Pokémon game to get the most out of Colosseum mode. If you're a fan, you'll love this.

71 TALES OF SYMPHONIA 84

NAMCO ■ NGC/100

This is very much a traditional RPG, and a very good looking one at that. The characters are beautifully designed and the locations are all, without exception, stunning. The only downer in the visual stakes is the relatively ugly overworld. The rubbish, clichéd dialogue will irritate as well.

72 RAYMAN 3 HOODLUM HAVOC 84

UBISOFT ■ NGC/78

Rayman somehow manages to create a fun platformer, despite the fact that he seems to be stuck in an age when this kind of thing was revolutionary. But it's bright, it's solid and it's got some enjoyable minigames. It doesn't get boring and the difficulty curve is scaled just right.

TOP FIVE ADVENTURE /RPGS



ZELDA THE WIND WAKER
Phenomenal. A reason to own a Gamecube in itself.

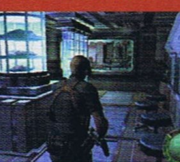
HARVEST MOON A WONDERFUL LIFE
Not your traditional RPG, this is an endearing, farming treat of a game.

TALES OF SYMPHONIA
A beautiful and epic RPG with the best battle system on the Gamecube.

PHANTASY STAR ONLINE
A number-cruncher that turns epic with a bit of t'internet.

SKIES OF ARCADIA LEGENDS
If 'classic' RPGs are your bag, this boy'll be a sackful of joy.

TOP FIVE ACTION ADVENTURE



RESIDENT EVIL 4
Takes the Resident Evil series to new heights by cranking up the action.

HITMAN 2
Compelling assassin sim that kills the competition dead.

SECOND SIGHT
Brilliant psychic stealth-'em-up from the team that brought you *Timesplitters 2*.

MGS: THE TWIN SNAKES
Beautifully updated version of Solid Snake's first outing.

ETERNAL DARKNESS
Dark, psychological horror – exclusive to Gamecube.

73 ISS 2 83

KONAMI ■ NGC/68

This series was untouchable, but then EA found out and made their *FIFA* games better. They both ramped up their quality while the GC *ISS* was left behind in their wake. *ISS 2* is a good game, but we were expecting much more of it and unfortunately these expectations weren't met.

74 ROGUE SQUADRON III REBEL STRIKE 83

LUCASARTS ■ NGC/88

Star Wars is all about screaming TIE fighters and taking on Star Destroyers, not poncing around on foot. The on-foot sections are a bit of a trudge and they ruin the excitement of the rest of the game. But it looks and sounds great, and the two-player *Rogue Leader* rules.

75 SERIOUS SAM NEXT ENCOUNTER 83

TAKE 2 ■ NGC/94

Don't be fooled by the name, this is very silly indeed. For a mere £20 you can spend hours gunning down wave after wave of brightly-coloured aliens across a range of historical locations. Okay, the killing can get a bit relentless, but for a bit of blasting fun, Sam's the man. Never mind the depth, feel the speed!

76 BATEN KAITOS 83

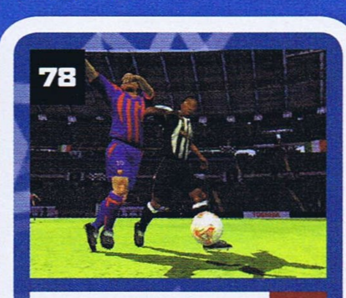
NAMCO ■ NGC/103

Role-playing adventure with card-based battles. This game is unique and delivers a wonderful, magical and fantastical world – the stunning vistas, towns and interiors are awash with lavish colours. Even the card system works well. Unfortunately it is let down by some stilted and painfully wooden voice acting.

77 FREEDOM FIGHTERS 83

EA ■ NGC/86

Although less serious than *Conflict Desert Storm 2*, this is a highly enjoyable squad-based third-person shooter. Many of the levels interact with each other, so objectives completed or neglected in one mission will affect the events in another. Forget the serious side, this is pure fun.



78 FIFA 2003 83

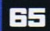
EA ■ NGC/75

After many years of yearly statistic and ever-so-slight gameplay tweaks (and the resulting criticism), this was the turnaround for the *FIFA* series. After having the football crown stolen by *Pro Evo*, EA sought to re-establish themselves as the kings of the footie game. The result was a remarkably in-depth, fluid and well presented game of football. This is a massive leap forward from previous *FIFA* games.

79 TONY HAWK'S UNDERGROUND 2 82

ACTIVISION ■ NGC/100

This time the graphics have a more cartoony feel, and Story mode features a lot of Bam Margera. Some bits don't belong in a skateboard game, like driving vehicles and walking. Those bits are rubbish. The rest is great, and includes chunks of the first three games – with a timer!



80 SUPER MONKEY BALL 2 — 82

SEGA ■ NGC/78

If games teach you one thing, it's this: out of balls, monkeys probably carry guns and want you dead. Inside balls (WHERE A MONKEY BELONGS!), the little creatures are an absolute delight. The format is the same as the first in the series. There are new minigames, and over 100 levels.



81 METAL ARMS: GLITCH IN THE SYSTEM — 82

VIVENDI ■ NGC/88

As hard as Ray Winstone in a steel top hat, this robot shoot-'em-up is tough right from the difficult training level. You take control of a small yellow robot called Glitch, and it's your task to defeat an army of robots using your considerable arsenal. The enemies are extremely resilient and have superb AI, so you need to be accurate and quick. Although the camera can be awkward and the landscape hazards are unfairly harsh.

82 PHANTASY STAR ONLINE EP III: CARD REV. — 82

SEGA ■ NGC/94

This is a new idea and a new direction for *PSO* – card-based battling. You now have to choose a side (the Arkz or the Heroside) and do battle with dice and cards. It's best if you are familiar with the original *PSO*, and unfortunately, you'll need a broadband adapter, but if you find one, then this is a decent RPG.



83 THE SIMS BUSTIN' OUT — 82

EA ■ NGC/89

Having spent the previous game imprisoned in their own home, this instalment sees your virtual people released out into the real world to work. It still doesn't exactly look brilliant and it doesn't sound too great, but as with all games with no absolute goal or plot, it will last you for a very, very long time indeed.

84 NFL STREET 2 — 81

EA ■ NGC/103

The game that tears up the rulebook and gives you licence to run like hell. This sequel boasts a new ability that allows you to run around the walls *Prince of Persia*-style to gain height when running, catching or passing a human pile-up. A quality package, though probably without mass appeal outside the US.

85 OCARINA OF TIME MASTER QUEST — 81

NINTENDO ■ NGC/80

This game is nothing short of a bargain. Although the graphics haven't been updated that doesn't mean that the gameplay isn't up to scratch. This version has tougher dungeons and different puzzles from the original *OOT*. Forget the graphics (it's an old game) and immerse yourself in Rinkydink's earlier outing.

86 AGGRESSIVE INLINE — 81

ACCLAIM ■ NGC/72

A top class rollerblading sim. Having wheels that stay attached to your feet when they're off the floor means that you can pull off moves like swinging around lampposts. There's even a Career mode. On the negative side, the soundtrack is rubbish and the graphics are a little bland.

PAUL'S SENSE TALK



AN EAGLE OR A STINKING RAT?

On one hand they say that eagles will soar. But then again, stinking rats don't get sucked into jet engines.

STUPOR-COMPUTER

Ok, so my computer can always beat me at chess, but when it comes to swimming, I win every single time.

TONGUE-TIED

Fool all your mates into thinking you've snogged Keira Knightley by going up to them and saying, "Hey, I've snogged Keira Knightley."

ART LOVE

If you got a wet tea bag and rubbed it over your favourite picture, it would definitely make it look older. And, I reckon, a darn sight more valuable too.

TIP 1

If you ever get phoned by those cold calling timeshare/window/ insurance telesales people, try this. Say you're not whoever it is they're asking for, but you'll go and get them. Leave the phone on the side, and go finish doing what you were doing. They'll hang up sooner or later.

Do you have more 'sense' than our own sense-spewing Art Chihuahua, Paul? More than likely! So send 'em in. The best get printed, and if you're really lucky, he may send you a ball of dog hair and chewing gum. Lucky you!

Send them to Paul at **paul.edwards@futurenet.co.uk** or to Sense Talk at the usual address.

87 THE SIMS — 81

EA ■ NGC/79

Your Sim has to do all the things a real person would: leave home, make friends, find a partner, eat, sleep and go to the lav. Yet it's all done in a bizarrely addictive way. There's no point to it and there are no objectives, but that's life for you – meaningless, but you want to keep doing it.

88 F1 CAREER CHALLENGE — 81

EA ■ NGC/83

Ever wanted to indulge in the life of an F1 driver? Now you can. This is a part of EA's *F1* series, but with the addition of an extensive Career mode. There are a series of trials to prove you can handle the F1 disciplines, then you can get on with the racing part, which looks good, shifts well and handles nicely.

89 NHL 2005 — 80

EA ■ NGC/99

This is a slick, quick game of hockey. The action's quick and the AI and graphics have been improved, but if you dislike the sport there simply won't be enough here to convince you that it's worthwhile. For the fans though, it's easy to learn and you can rack up huge scores. Good fun.

90 MORTAL KOMBAT DEADLY ALLIANCE — 80

MIDWAY ■ NGC/77

The fighting system's been vastly overhauled from earlier *MKs*, although it's far too easy to get an infinite by button mashing. The lack of ring-outs and stage-specific finishers is disappointing. Still, you've got three fighting styles per character, a ton of unlockables and loads of gore. Best with two players.

91 BALDUR'S GATE DARK ALLIANCE — 80

VIVENDI ■ NGC/81

Endlessly battling goblins and orcs can get a little tedious, but if you've ever played D&D you'll enjoy levelling up and spending your EXP. However, it's a lazy port from PS2, with slowdown and a jittery framerate. Nonetheless, the game still looks a treat despite this problem.

92 PAC-MAN VS — 80

NAMCO ■ NGC/90

This tiny gem is free, but only when you buy another, inferior full-priced title (*R: Racing Evolution*). While *Pac-Man Vs* isn't particularly complex, the four-player mechanic works well. Think of it as a trifle to have fun with between serious gaming sessions. You'll need a GBA and link cable to play it properly.

93 DEF JAM FIGHT FOR NY — 80

EA ■ NGC/99

Following on directly from the end of *Def Jam Vendetta*, this is yet another wrestling/rap crossover that will appeal to fans of both genres. The wrestling is slickly executed and there's a massive amount of unlockables and extras to keep you occupied. Unfortunately, it is ruined by a poor framerate.

94 THE SIMPSONS HIT AND RUN — 80

VIVENDI ■ NGC/87

After a succession of gaming stinkers, the Simpsons take a tip from the *Grand Theft Auto* series and set about stealing cars, taking on missions and doling out a bit of cartoon-style violence. It's certainly not original by any stretch of the imagination, but it is loads of fun.

95 MARIO PARTY 5 — 80

NINTENDO ■ NGC/89

Ain't no party like a *Mario Party;* except all the other parties in the series. This console-based boardgame is one of the best yet, but is still really only good as a multiplayer game. The board game bits are a little slow and dull, but the minigames (popping other players' inner tubes, mech fights...) are hilarious.

96 DIE HARD VENDETTA — 80

VIVENDI ■ NGC/74

WARNING: Do not play this in earshot of old people; the swearing on display here may offend their sensitive ears. However, there's a fair bit of gunplay, excellent set-pieces and cheesy dialogue. This has plenty of all three, all hampered by cumbersome controls and frustrating sections.

97 POOL PARADISE — 80

IGNITION ■ NGC/92

Not just UK pool – poke your cue at eight-ball, nine-ball and stunt tables too if that's what fills your triangle. Using the analogue stick to power your cue is a nice touch, and darts and *Dropzone* feature as minigames. Earth shattering? No. But it's all solid and playable, as you'd expect.

98 PUYO POP FEVER — 80

SEGA ■ NGC/91

Puyo Pop – if you've never heard of it you must have started gaming all of a week ago. It's quite simple: match coloured blobs that drop from the top of the screen and – hey presto! – they disappear. How radical is that? The two-player mode is a whole lot more fun than you'd think, too.

99 THE INCREDIBLE HULK ULTIMATE DESTRUCTION — 79

VIVENDI ■ NGC/110

The Incredible Hulk takes a leaf out of Spidey's book and goes mental in a large, free-roaming city. Almost everything is destructible and you have the ability to weaponize pieces of the environment. However, it does have its flaws, like the way its difficulty curve is based entirely on flinging more rockets at you.

100 HARRY POTTER & THE PRISONER OF AZKABAN — 79

EA ■ NGC/95

A *Harry Potter* title that actually works pretty well as a game? Whatever next? The way you use the differing skills of Harry, Ron and Hermione to solve problems adds interest to a rather thin storyline. The controls are a bit iffy, but the atmosphere's spot-on. Not just for Potter fans.





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